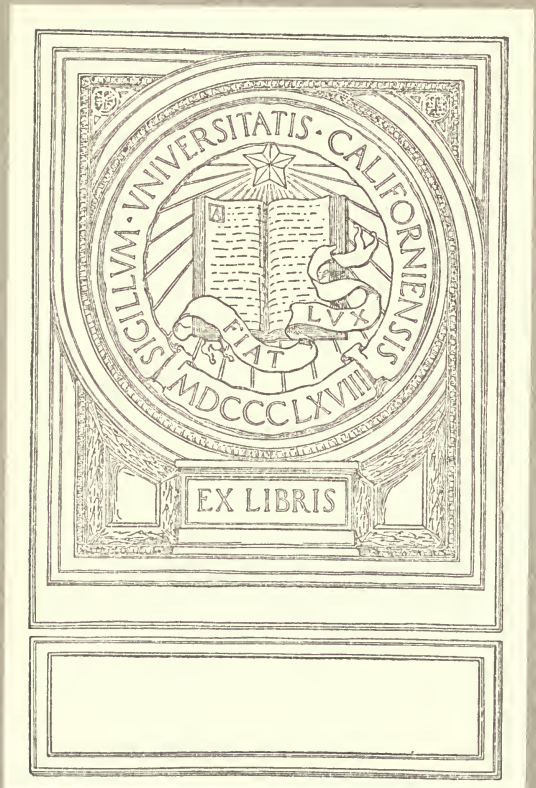
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THE DETOUR

A PLAY

BY

OWEN DAVIS

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1922

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By Owen Davis

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FOREWORD

"The Detour" needs no justification for its appearance in print. It is one of those studies in realism which — whether seen or read — impresses by reason of its tremendous sincerity. As such, it should be regarded as an encouraging, an all too rare sign of the deepening of native dramaturgic art in the American theatre.

The dramatic critic was right who declared that, had "The Detour" been produced as the work of an unknown author, it would have been hailed as the putting forth, the flowering of a rare native plant, from which much might be expected in the future. I see no reason why this should not apply just as well to a dramatist who, like Mr. Owen Davis, has been brought up, dramatically, in the glare of melodrama, and who has — after learning the tricks of his trade — broken from the type of play expected of him, only to give us something bigger, something more profound, more nearly what might be designated as an American *genre* drama. All the more reason, it seems, for us to rejoice that gold has turned up — as precursor, we hope, of a rich vein to follow.

Sincerity is at the basis of any worthy play, whether of realism or of the imagination. Otherwise, painting things as they are degenerates into mere photography and usually attracts by reason of two cardinal excel-

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lences or faults, according to your point of view: curiosity and vulgar attractiveness. Naturalism is a cancerous growth on the face of art; realism is the arrangement of life as we know it, rising out of human relationship. The one is bald fact, the other truth artistically clad because of a burning faith in life's continuity.

This burning faith enriches the whole story of "The Detour"; and continuity marks the merit of its structure. Mr. Davis has seen clearly, has sensed fully — noting the myriad facets shaped from the materials of the humblest life — shades of character and various motives inherent in locality and tradition. His play has the tang of the soil about it; it exudes a flavor born of struggle against environment. It does not strain after contrast of fitness with unfitness, with a certain cruel formlessness which marks Eugene O'Neill's "Beyond the Horizon." It does not attempt to compress folk-legend with reality as Alice Brown does in her passionless "Children of Earth." It does not strive for miniature interest, so strikingly concentrated in Susan Glaspell's "Trifles." "The Detour" — if there is anything conscious at all about its structure — systematically discards the machinery of theatricalism and is starkly simple. But, like all simple things in life, it is able to carry with it, rising out of character and situation, real racy humor and problems common to all — not alone to those whose vision is closed in by the boundaries of farm life.

The burning glass of drama has persistently narrowed the canvas of the theatre these many years. Yet dramatists in America have been loath to give up manipulation of action for the sake of *genre* work and

genuine creativeness. James A. Herne, our early realist in the modern American theatre, rose far above the rural drama with which he is mistakenly identified; he possessed a profound sympathy with character and could draw from narrow, yet rich circumstance, homely truth — in its fundamentals not so unlike universal truth. Amidst the melodrama of "Shore Acres" he wrote such palpitant scenes as that of Nathaniel Berry and his brother discussing the sale of the farm. He wrote an entire play, "Margaret Fleming," daring for its day, an intensive domestic tragedy. "The Detour," in its treatment, is of the same caliber — with the technique of life itself.

I recall once — in the olden days when an eighteen-hour flier-train service between New York and Chicago was a novelty — riding in the cab of an engine thus destined to eat up space on a cold February afternoon, just as the shadows of twilight were beginning to turn the Hudson River into a sheet of cold white steel. There were streaks of color in the wintry sky and a streak of red glow from the intense furnace of our cab, as the train sped on at sixty miles an hour. At a curve, the fireman crept to the cab door of the engine and swung out on the step, clinging to a side rail. Against the cold swish of wind he let fly a bundle of papers in the direction of a shanty, far down a bank-side and into a hollow. I leaned out of the window in time to see a bent old woman open the door of her shack and make for those papers. The fireman yelled to me an explanation — above the roar of the steam, the shrill blast of the whistle, the rumble of wheels over the ribbons of rail — "I bring her the news from New York once a week."

Here, in this action, was material for melodrama and realism. Mr. Davis, by evidence of "The Detour," could handle both treatments. In art, the difference in the technique would be the difference between a poster that arrests the eye, and Rembrandt's "Old Woman Paring Her Nails" that challenges the creative instinct in us. In one mood, the thrill of the ride, the danger of the fireman's precarious position would have appealed to Mr. Davis, as an unconscious act of daily heroism; in another mood he would have wondered at the life of the woman in the shack — tried to square with her bowed figure the forces shaping her destiny, as Maeterlinck said of the old man seated silent in his armchair. There is no question as to which is the profounder drama.

One day, at Northport, Long Island, Mr. Davis sat in his car, overlooking a farm, with its lonely house in the distance. There were evidences aound it, even in its typical isolation, of a woman's hand. The creative mind is always eager for such sign posts of life on which to fasten its tentacles. Mayhap a detour made his chauffeur skirt around the farm, thus denying it contact with the life of the open road. From such simple beginnings, "The Detour" was evolved.

Mr. Davis has always claimed and asked that a critic judge each separate work of his on its own merits. He is justified in this request. We do judge the present play as a supreme picture of farm life, of mother love and wifely rebellion, where the tragedy is twofold — in the woman's yearning and stirring for self-expression through her daughter; and in the daughter's inadequacy through the inheritance of her father's stodginess and the confining claim of the soil upon her. In

most of its dimensions the play holds measure. I do not claim flawlessness for it; I do claim for it bigness of intent.

Mr. Davis's previous inroads into the realm of melodrama do not have to be known for any appreciation of "The Detour." There is no special reason for recalling those days when he wrote from ten to twelve such pieces a year—their names are as bloodcurdling as those which came from the pen of David Belasco when he was writing for mining towns out in California — except to state that he must have perfected his technical expertness in such a hard school. It is a glowing tribute to Mr. Davis's essential worth that he can now give us "The Detour"—so calm, so progressively fatalistic, so quiet in its outbursts — after association with a method that often deadens sensitiveness to character.

But we are all conscious — we who go continually to the theatre or read many plays — that there is another step to take beyond realism. I find Mr. Davis ready to take it. In the atmosphere of realism, with which our stage has been drenched, there has been felt the need of a more palpitant spirit, akin to mysticism, yet more attached to earthly attainment. The mother, in "The Detour," shows glints of this spirit — the unquenchable determination to outwit environment, rise higher than circumstance. It is a step thoroughly in consonance with the American character. Given the ability to write such realistic scenes as are here depicted, and the desire to infuse into the materials of character an aspiration which overcomes adversity, and a play greater and wider in its stage appeal than "The Detour" could be written. But one must have evidences

of such a play as the present one before one can hope for the other.

I am confident that "The Detour" represents thus far one of our highest attainments in American realism for the stage. It is worthy to be read widely; as a representative of native *genre* work it is worthy of consideration abroad. It is a play that any repertory theatre should welcome. Such sheer realism requires sheer acting, and invites and challenges the best in players. It is rarely that an American playwright penetrates so deeply into American life. That is why I greet "The Detour" heartily as "the real thing" in the theatre.

MONTROSE J. MOSES.

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THE DETOUR

"The Detour" was originally produced in New York August 23, 1921, with the following cast:

STEPHEN HARDY.....*Augustin Duncan*
HELEN, his wife.....*Effie Shannon*
KATE, their daughter.....*Angela McCahill*
TOM LANE,.....*Willard Robertson*
DANA LAMONT.....*Harry Andrews*
DORA LAMONT.....*Eva Condon*
BEN GLENNY.....*Claude Cooper*
WEINSTEIN.....*James R. Waters*
JAKE.....*Chester Herman*

ACT I.

MRS. HARDY'S KITCHEN.

ACT II.

THE VERANDA, That afternoon.

ACT III.

THE KITCHEN, A little later.

TIME: The Present.

THE PLACE: Near Northport, L. I.

THE DETOUR

ACT I

SCENE: *Kitchen of Stephen Hardy's farmhouse on the road to Northport (Long Island), a simple, homelike room quite without any of the conveniences of modern invention, and equally without any studied air of grimness. The room should be as unpretentious as the play and as far away from symbolism, — just the plain home of plain people. Door back left to yard; a rather wide window back right looks out upon side veranda. Door to hall at left. Cook stove right. Sink above stove. This kitchen, out of respect for the "parlor", is used as the family living room, and the small dining table at right is now covered with a dull red cloth. Door to a "pantry" at right below stove; when this door is open it is possible to see the usual flour barrel, sugar bucket, etc. Near the window at back is a cheap easel on which is a conventional water color; on a stand by the easel are a few odds and ends of an artist's paraphernalia. There is a shelf above the stove, and among the articles on this shelf is a rather hideous old jug in which is a bunch of artificial flowers.*

It is early afternoon of a July day. At right center, seated by the table, is Kate Hardy, a girl of eighteen;

Helen Hardy, her mother, is in the doorway looking out.

HELEN

All right!

[*She crosses down to shelf above the stove and taking the jug in which are the artificial flowers, she crosses to the table at right center.*

KATE

Somehow it always frightens me!

HELEN

It needn't! What 's here is ours.

[*She removes the artificial flowers and turns the jug upside down. The jug was about one third full of money, old bills, one or two gold pieces, and silver. Kate takes five dollar bills from her little pocketbook and adds them to the pile.*

KATE

It 's the last of my school-teaching money until September.

HELEN

You 'll get your pay for clerking in the drug store in another week. (*She sits by table*) How much did you put in just now?

KATE

Five dollars.

HELEN

Where 's the rest of it?

KATE (*hesitates*)

I — I was going to buy some goods for a dress; we could make it ourselves, of course. Just a little organdy or something.

HELEN

You can get along, I guess, without it.

KATE (*wistfully*)

I 'm ashamed to go to the pictures Saturday nights; I haven't a thing!

HELEN (*firmly*)

Your blue dress will do well enough, put it all in.

KATE (*reluctant*)

Yes, mother.

[*She takes a few more bills from her pocketbook and adds them to the pile.*

HELEN

I 'm going to count it.

KATE

You 'll wear it all out before it 's any good to us!

HELEN (*almost gaily. Starting to count money*)

I 'm like a miser I saw once in an opera, — I think it was "The Chimes of Normandy." *He* took me to the theatre in New York three or four times the first year we were married. You count the silver.

KATE (*piling up the coins*)

Some of the summer people from here, and even as far down as Shoreham, drive their automobiles up to New York almost every day!

HELEN (*counting bills*)

I know.

KATE

And I 've never been there!

HELEN

You will!

KATE

I never used to believe it, but we 've saved a lot.

HELEN (*looking over at her*)

How much?

KATE

Sixty dollars and fifty cents, counting the gold pieces.

HELEN

I 've got six hundred and forty; let 's see — that 's six hundred and forty and sixty dollars and fifty cents——?

KATE (*promptly*)

Seven hundred dollars and fifty cents.

HELEN

You 're quick at figures!

KATE (*laughs*)

You 're not!

HELEN

I get it mixed with receipts for gingerbread and when to give the calf that medicine your father left for it. (*She starts to put the money back into the jar*) Seven hundred dollars and fifty cents! Just my chicken and egg money and little odds and ends, and your pay for school teaching and for clerking at Nepper's, summers! It 's almost like the loaves and fishes in the Bible!

KATE

If you 'd only let me go with that!

HELEN

No, not till we get a thousand.

KATE (*sadly*)

Three hundred dollars more!

HELEN

All but fifty cents.

KATE (*impatiently*)

What 's fifty cents?

HELEN

If you 'd remember how we 've had to scrimp for every penny, you wouldn't ask that.

KATE

How could I help remembering! Sometimes I hate that money! It 's all the good times I 've never had, and all the things I 've done without!

HELEN

You 'll thank me for it some time.

KATE

Oh, yes! Only couldn't I just take this seven hundred and make it do?

HELEN

No, I always said a thousand. It would be so awful if you had to come back! Two years it might take you, and *he* won't want *you* to go; he would n't send you anything; good teachers cost money, and painting things, and a studio! We 've got to get a thousand; we can save it in another year.

KATE

We never have saved that much.

HELEN

All the more reason why we should this time.

KATE

A year—— (*She sighs*) It 's so long to wait.

HELEN

I been here twenty.

KATE

But not knowing that pretty soon you were going! It was your home; you knew you were going to live here always.

HELEN

I 've told you times enough about that, how hard it was for me to settle down.

KATE

But, mother! *I 'm* young!

HELEN

So was I, once, and as far as that goes, I 've still got my teeth! I guess you can stand it another year.

KATE

You wouldn't go away from here if you could!

HELEN

Yes, I would — quick! Lookin' back, it seems like I was crazy I didn't go!

KATE (*shocked*)

From father?

HELEN (*bitterly*)

From this! (*She looks about the room bitterly*) It ain't enough! Life ought to be bigger than — than this kitchen! It ought to be brighter than I been able to keep those old pots and pans! I knew that, when I was your age, but somehow I forgot it for a while. I 'd always meant to get away and go to New York, or somewhere's where bein' born an' bein' dead was n't the only things that ever happened. I 'd made my mind up to go, I 'd saved for it harder even than we 've been savin'; one more term of winter school teachin' an' I figured I 'd have enough.

KATE

But you didn't go!

HELEN

No, I took my money and bought my weddin' things. It was awful lonesome around here winters, and your father 's got a way of gettin' what he wants.

KATE

Mother! You 're not *sorry?*

HELEN

I tell you it ain't enough. (*She looks out the window at the vista of truck gardens then half-turns toward Kate*) At first, when we were married, I thought it was. Then it got to be just drudgery, just work, nothing else; every other part of me just shriveled up. (*She walks slowly down to table*) When I was a girl I used to watch married folks and I thought it was like that, but somehow I got to loving him before I knew it. I didn't have any talent like you have; I just had the hunger to do things.

KATE

But if we're wrong? If I haven't really a talent?

HELEN

No, there 's more justice than that in the world. You 've got what I didn't have.

KATE

We can 't be sure.

HELEN

You 'll be a great artist!

KATE

Mother!

HELEN

You will! I 've known it ever since I got you that first box of water colors when you were a little girl. You 're more like his people in looks, but the rest of you is *me!* The thing I wanted to do you 're going to do!

KATE

Yes, mother!

HELEN

As soon as I saw you favored me in spirit, only you had the talent I didn't have, I knew just what we had to do, and I started over again saving for it. Your life isn't going to be like this, not even with a good man like your father!

KATE

He *is* good, but he 's hard.

HELEN

He 's had to be, to live!

KATE

But he never thinks of anything but land, then more and more!

HELEN

There 's no money in garden truck unless you have a lot of land.

KATE

But he keeps us so poor, buying it, and he 's always so worried about the taxes and the mortgages — and before he 's paid for the last piece he 's always buying another.

HELEN

He loves it! Just land!

KATE

It 's merciless, the way he makes you work, and the way he works himself!

HELEN

It 's being a slave just to things, just cooking and cleaning and digging and planting! You sha'n't be that!

[*She picks up the jug and puts the artificial flowers back in it.*

KATE

I 'm always worried about that money; supposing something happened to it?

HELEN

Nobody 'd look in here.

[*She crosses to shelf and puts the jug away.*

KATE

They might!

HELEN

No, it 's safe; it 's been over ten years I 've been saving up and no one but us two knows about it. Your father don't notice things much.

KATE

Only if it 's good growing weather, or if it is n't! Or if it's an acre of land he could buy! Mother! Was he always like that?

HELEN

I guess so, only I didn't know it! (*She sighs and crosses and stands in the open door*) I guess folks don't change much. (*She stands for a moment looking out*) He 's comin', they 've finished pickin' the string beans; weren't many of 'em, I guess. (*She sighs again*) No, folks don't change much; he 's heavier than he was, and he don't hardly ever smile. He used to, he had a real nice smile. (*She crosses slowly back to Kate*) Farmin's pretty hard on a man.

KATE

And on a woman too.

HELEN

Yes.

[*Steve Hardy enters, a tall, strong farmer of forty-five, dressed for his work in the fields.*

STEVE

We got the beans all picked.

[*He crosses and draws a dipper of water from the sink.*

I 'm goin' to make up the truck load with the summer cabbages — what there is of them. (*He drinks heartily*) It 's hot out there?

KATE

I picked beans for an hour; then mother made me stop.

STEVE

Your mother 's spoiled you, but that 's all right. I don't want you working in the fields.

HELEN

I won't have it — you both know that; that 's why I called her in! I don't want her to neglect her painting.

STEVE (*pleasantly enough*)

I guess the world would get along without her painting, all right. You're going to work at Nepper's to-morrow, ain't you?

KATE

Yes. I promised to go down this afternoon to learn the stock! It doesn't seem as though I *could* begin that all over again!

STEVE

How much is he giving you this year?

KATE

Fourteen dollars a week.

STEVE

That 's a lot for just standing behind a counter and waiting on folks, and it 's cash every Saturday night. I 'd feel rich if I had it after I pay my help and put aside for my taxes and interest.

HELEN

That 's because we 're land poor, the same as we 've always been.

STEVE (*angrily*)

It 's because I haven't land enough to make truck farming a business like it ought to be, so as I could have help and teams and tools and do things right, and make money! I need twice the land I 've got, and I'm going to have it.

[*He turns on the water at the sink and holds his hand under it; for the first time it is seen that he has hurt his hand slightly and that there is blood on it.*

HELEN

Your hand 's cut!

STEVE

That 's what I came in for, to tie it up. I sprayed the cabbages only Tuesday and I don't want to get the poison in it.

HELEN

Let 's see.

[*She takes his hand and looks at it.*

STEVE

Knife slipped. I wouldn't notice it only for the poison.

HELEN

I 'll fix it before you touch the cabbages; clean it good, I 'll get a rag.

[*He holds it under the water as she selects a bit of cloth from the table drawer.*

STEVE

Tom Lane 's opening his garage to-day.

KATE

I know.

STEVE

No fool like a young fool!

HELEN (*crosses with her improvised bandage*)

Here! (*He holds out his hand and she deftly binds it up*) I never saw so many cars as there are this year, and the summer business has hardly started. I shouldn't wonder if Tom made money.

STEVE

A man 's a farmer or he ain't!

HELEN

There 's money in other things besides truck farming.

STEVE

The twenty acres this side of his house is the best truck land on the north shore, if a man had it that knew how to lay it out.

HELEN (*finishes bandage*)

There!

STEVE

I must get them started at the cabbages. (*He turns and stops in front of the easel. The picture on the easel is facing the window and he sees only the back of it*) What 's that?

HELEN

Kate 's painting. I made her bring it down; I wanted you to look at it.

KATE (*nervously*)

No, mother!

STEVE

What do you want me to look at it for?

HELEN

She 's your daughter, too; it don't seem right your not knowing what she 's doing.

STEVE

She paints good enough. I always thought. What of it?

HELEN

She 's an artist! I mean a real artist! Two or three years' teachin' in New York will make her as good as any of 'em.

[*He laughs a rather coarse and jarring laugh.*

KATE (*hurt*)

You see, mother!

HELEN

It 's your father that don't see, but he 's got to; everybody has! I want you to look at this painting right now!

[*She faces him angrily.*

STEVE

What do I know about pictures?

HELEN

You 've got eyes! (*She crosses to painting*) It 's just a painting she's made sitting in her window. It 's just what you see every day of your life. Look!

[*She turns the painting to face him and the audience. A simple water color of a rural landscape.*

STEVE

I see!

KATE (*fearful*)

I don't think father cares about——

[*Steve bends forward and takes the painting from Helen. Kate stops.*

HELEN (*greatly pleased*)

He does! He likes it!

KATE (*proudly*)

Father!

HELEN

You see something in it, don't you, Stephen?

STEVE

I see Tom Jones' twenty-acre field in it. Look how it lies to the sun there, sloping just enough! I 'm going to have that land. I 've got to!

HELEN (*anxiously*)

But the picture!

STEVE

Here! Take it! (*He drops it on table*) All Tom can think of is his new garage. He 'd sell, I know he would! (*He crosses to door, stops and turns*) Kate!

KATE (*quite crushed*)

Yes, father.

STEVE

I 've got to ask you to help me out with the money you earn from Nepper this summer!

HELEN (*alarmed*)

Stephen!

STEVE

She had her school money, I never touched it. It ain't a thing I want to do, but I 've got to! (*He turns to Kate*) You give your mother ten dollars every Saturday. I 'll be expectin' it.

[*He exits.*

KATE (*takes up picture*)

He didn't care about my painting — all he could see was the land!

HELEN (*sadly*)

He 'll take your money! Now we can't do it in a year!

KATE (*angrily*)
It is n't fair. What right has he to make me——
HELEN (*interrupts her*)
Hush, dear! I 'm going to find a way!
KATE
You can't!
HELEN
I don't know. . . .
[*Tom Lane, a young fellow of about twenty-five, comes to the open door. Tom is in working clothes, a healthy, sturdy young animal.*
TOM
Can I come in, Mrs. Hardy?
HELEN
Of course you can, Tom.
[*As he enters.*
KATE (*smiles at him*)
How 's the new garage?
TOM
Great! My stock 's in — more 'n a thousand dollars' worth, and five hundred gallons of gas.
KATE
So you 've really started!
TOM (*proudly*)
My sign 's out; looks good if I did paint it myself. (*He grins cheerfully at Kate*) I don't pretend to be an artist.
HELEN (*proudly*)
Artists don't paint signs!
TOM
I got my first job, too, fixing a car for a man named Lamont, Dana Lamont. (*Kate looks up at the men-*

tion of the name, then looks closely at her painting) He 's taken the Curtis bungalow for the summer.

HELEN (*busy about kitchen*)

His wife 's been here twice for eggs and butter, — she 's a nice woman; she made me show her all over the house yesterday. I never saw anybody make such a fuss as she did over mother's old curly maple bed and dresser.

TOM

Why?

HELEN

She liked it, but she don't know a thing about furniture. When I took the covers off the red plush set in the parlor she hardly so much as looked at it!

TOM

Well, they 've got money, and they 're going to be good customers of mine. His car's in my place now.

KATE

I think it 's better than farming.

TOM

I know it is. I 'm worried about the roads being so bad just below; that 's going to hurt. Some folks will go up the Middle Island Road, and I'll lose them, but I'm bound to make good money.

HELEN

That Mrs. Lamont is coming for a dozen more eggs to-day. She 's expecting company. (*She takes a basket from shelf*) I'll get them for her.

KATE

I'll do it.

HELEN

No, show Tom your painting. You 've been out enough in the hot sun.

[*She exits.*

TOM

She 's good to you!

KATE

Mother's wonderful!

TOM

She takes care of you just like you were some — some sort of a treasure!

KATE (*laughingly*)

I know!

TOM

Too good for rough things — too good for rough people — and she thinks I 'm one of 'em — and I guess I am.

KATE

My painting 's finished.

TOM

Is it? Let 's look.

[*Crosses and looks.*

KATE (*anxiously*)

I tried so hard, and now I don't know.

TOM

Don't know what?

KATE

If it 's really good.

TOM (*after a long look*)

It 's great!

KATE

Don't say so if you don't mean it!

TOM

It 's great! (*He points with his finger*) That 's the fence between your place and mine, and that 's my twenty-acre lot! Any fool knows that 's a good picture!

KATE

I think it 's good. I 'm almost sure of it! I 've worked so hard, Tom, without anybody much to help me — sometimes I 'm not sure, and that 's awful — it would break mother's heart, and mine, of course!

TOM

It 's a nice way to spend your time, when you ain't workin'. Doing anything to-night? I might come over.

KATE

The movie theater 's opening to-night for the summer. I sort of thought I might walk down there with — with one of the girls.

[*Helen reënters at back with a dozen eggs in her basket.*

TOM (*very reluctant*)

I — I 'll take you, if you want to go.

KATE

Don't you?

TOM

They bother me, movin' pictures, all about other folks' wives and murders and poor girls gettin' married to rich men, an' young fellers makin' a million dollars in a couple of days, when everybody knows they can't. It wastes your time, and I don't know as it 's right, puttin' ideas into peoples' heads.

HELEN
What would you put there?

TOM
It 's hard enough to keep on your job without thinking about things.

KATE
But you can 't just work!

TOM
Why?

KATE
I think the pictures are fun, and they 're a change from reading.

TOM
Book reading? Books are just as bad! Seems like every liar took to writin' books! I gave 'em all up but one.

KATE
What one?

HELEN (*drily*)
His account book.

TOM (*grins at her*)
That 's right.

HELEN
Maybe it ain't right, but it 's *true*.

TOM
Laugh, all you please, and of course I know you 're laughing. I ain't mean, anyhow, I ain't dog mean — but what I want is money. When I get enough of that I guess folks will forgive me if I don't know Charlie Chaplin from Douglas Fairbanks, an' even if I ain't a fancy dancer.

[*He steps toward door.*

HELEN

There 's more folks know how to save money than there is that know how to spend it.

TOM

By the time a feller learns enough to save it he 's got too much sense to spend it. I 'm going back to the garage and sit and wait for trade. That 's got the pictures beat, I guess!

[*He crosses stage. Kate looks after him a little wistfully.*

KATE

Good-by, Tom.

TOM

See you later.

[*He exits.*

KATE

It 's funny — in some ways he is so like father, and living right next door to us.

HELEN

Maybe it 's catchin'. (*She crosses to Kate and putting her hand on Kate's shoulder she looks down at her gravely*) Kate?

KATE

Yes, mother.

HELEN

He 's been around a lot lately!

KATE

Yes.

HELEN

You 're not thinkin' of him? (*Kate drops her eyes. Helen looks frightened*) Kate! If you was to do that, what 's the good of all we 've done?

KATE

Oh, I wouldn't. Not — not the way you mean — only — only I think he likes me — and — and——

[*She stops.*

HELEN

And he 's the best you know.

KATE

Yes, he 's that.

HELEN

But not the best you 're going to know! We think that thousand dollars it will take us most ten years to save is a lot of money?

KATE

I should say so!

HELEN

In New York it is n't anything!

KATE (*worried*)

But——

HELEN

Don't be silly! You 've got a talent! They 'll make room for you!

KATE

I hope so.

HELEN

They will — if you work hard — and you must! If you was to fail, I 'd feel somehow as if all my life had been just wasted!

KATE (*earnestly*)

I 'll work.

HELEN (*tenderly*)

I know you will.

KATE (*touched*)

You 're the one who ought to go, mother!

HELEN

I 'm going, the very best way — the part of me that 's in you is going — what I was once — what I wanted to be — I gave all that to you. When they all come crowding around you some day, saying you 're a great artist, men and women, different from the kind we know, you 'll be proud, but you won't be so proud as I 'll be!

[*Dana Lamont, a New York artist, comes to the door. Lamont, although an artist, is not at all of the "artistic type"; he is just a cultivated, well-mannered man of middle age.*

DANA

I beg your pardon, but I was to meet my wife here, Mrs. Lamont.

HELEN

She was coming for some eggs, but I haven't seen her. Come in and wait, won't you?

DANA (*enters*)

Thank you. She asked me to meet her here.

HELEN

This is my daughter, Mr. Lamont.

DANA

Good morning, Miss — Hardy — is n't it?

KATE

Yes, sir.

HELEN

Won't you sit down?

[*Offers chair.*

DANA

Thanks — no — I am going to leave a message for my wife, if you don't mind. Please say that I have walked on to the new garage to see what is being

done about my car. If the man here can't fix it, I shall have to arrange to have it towed to Huntington.

HELEN

Tom Lane will fix it!

DANA

Really — is he a good mechanic?

HELEN

He 's a good business man.

KATE

He 's a good mechanic, too, mother!

HELEN

I guess so; anyhow he won't let it go to Huntington.

DANA

Would you mind asking Mrs. Lamont to walk along and meet me on the road?

HELEN

I 'll tell her if she comes.

DANA

She 'll come! Thank you very much. (*He turns to doorway*) I envy you the view from your front windows, Mrs. Hardy; it 's quite unusual.

HELEN

That depends on how long you 've been looking at it.

DANA

I think I could enjoy looking at it forever.

HELEN

I haven't tried that yet, but I was born right on the other side of the road.

DANA

And you are tired of it, of course. Just as my eyes have grown tired of bricks and mortar, of curb-

stones and asphalt! Beauty, after all, is in contrasts.

HELEN

We don't raise 'em around here.

DANA

You have managed to keep a twinkle in your eyes, in spite of monotony — so you 're all right! Good afternoon! Good afternoon, Miss Hardy.

[*Kate bows shyly and he exits.*

HELEN (*looking after him*)

That 's what I meant, a gentleman! That 's the kind of men you 're going to know!

KATE

Dana Lamont! Don't you know who he is? Wait! (*She selects a magazine from the small table and turns the pages until she finds the page, then crosses to Helen*) Look! I knew as soon as Tom spoke his name.

HELEN (*awed*)

He painted that! (*She looks at the reproduction in the magazine with something almost like reverence*) Dana Lamont! Kate! Why didn't you show him the picture!

[*She points to Kate's picture.*

KATE

Mother! I wouldn't have dared!

HELEN (*firmly*)

I wish I 'd known!

KATE

Mother!

HELEN

That 's the way to learn, from the real big ones; from folks that know!

KATE

But I wouldn't have any right to bother a man like Dana Lamont!

HELEN

Why! I showed his wife how to bake corn bread yesterday.

KATE

That 's different.

HELEN

It ain't! I know how to bake and he knows how to paint. Folks that *know* ain't mean; it 's only fools.

[*Dora Lamont comes to door. Dora is a pretty and beautifully dressed woman with a frank, jolly nature, quite unaffected and kindly.*

DORA

Was that my husband I saw disappearing down the road?

HELEN

Yes, it was. Come in, Mrs. Lamont. (*Dora enters*) This is my daughter.

DORA

How do you do!

KATE (*shyly*)

I 'm pleased to meet you.

HELEN (*shows magazine*)

We were just looking at this.

DORA (*looks*)

"The Harvest." Is n't it lovely!

HELEN (*gravely*)

Yes — lovely! (*She puts magazine on table*) She paints too!

[*She looks proudly at Kate.*

DORA

Really — that 's splendid!

KATE

Please, mother!

HELEN (*gets basket*)

Here 's your eggs — Mr. Lamont said he was going to the garage and you was to meet him on the road.

DORA

Thank you, but these are only eggs — where is my butter?

HELEN

You got a pound yesterday!

DORA

But I want it every day!

HELEN

Oh — well, butter won't hurt you! Get a pound of butter from the spring house, Kate.

KATE

Yes, mother. (*She crosses and gets a plate*) I won't be a minute.

[*She exits.*

DORA

She 's pretty!

HELEN

She 's more than that — I want to show you something — that 's why I sent her. (*She crosses and turns Kate's painting*) Look!

[*Dora looks.*

DORA

Why, it 's really very nice!

HELEN

Yes.

DORA
You must be proud of her!

HELEN
Yes.

DORA (*looking at picture*)
What a lovely country it is about here. The slope of that hill side is exquisite!

HELEN
That 's what my husband says, but he was thinking of the drainage.

DORA (*laughs*)
That 's like a husband; not mine, of course, but artists are different.

HELEN
Yes — you think it 's good, that picture; I mean, really good?

DORA
I am sure it is!

HELEN (*anxiously*)
Not for a girl, I don't mean — I mean for anybody — for an artist?

DORA (*hesitates*)
Why——

HELEN
She 's going to New York to study, we 've been planning it all her life. All the help she 's had was a Miss Crosby at Northport. You think she 's got talent — I mean real talent?

DORA
My husband says no one has a right to say that unless it 's really so, and of course I 'm not a judge.

HELEN
He is.

DORA

Yes.

HELEN

Would he look at it if you was to ask him?

DORA

Of course he would.

HELEN

And tell her where to go when she gets to New York, — who the best teachers are?

DORA

I am sure he would; I 'll bring him here myself.

HELEN

It 's awful to ask favors, but you do sometimes, for people you love enough!

DORA

Of course you do, and it is n't a favor. My husband says one proof of a real artist is his willingness to help another.

HELEN

I knew that.

DORA (*laughs*)

You know a lot, don't you?

HELEN

Yes and no — mostly no.

[*Kate enters with Ben Glenny, a tall, lank, serious-looking fellow who is in his shirt sleeves. In one hand he has a hammer and in the other a pine board on which, in black letters, is painted the word* DETOUR.

[*Kate comes forward with the plate of butter in her hand, Ben Glenny stops in the doorway.*

KATE

Here 's Mr. Glenny, he wants to borrow a nail.

BEN

Got to put this up. (*Holds up the sign*) Going to close the road and send folks around Smithtown way. I thought I had nails with me, but I ain't.

KATE (*at drawer of table*)

This big enough?

[*She holds up nail.*

BEN

About right.

KATE

Here. (*She brings him four or five nails*) Sure they 're enough?

BEN

Plenty, thanks; the men are closing the road now and I ought to get this up quick.

[*He exits. Helen rolls the butter up in a clean cloth and puts it in the basket with the eggs.*

HELEN

The road 's pretty bad; it 's a good thing they 're fixing it. Detour, that 's a new word; seems we 're borrowing lots of things from France. It ain't a bad word — Detour — only I don't know as I get the meaning of it exactly.

KATE

It means a turning.

DORA

Another way around, to get to the same place.

HELEN

Oh, well, so long as a person gets where they want to go, I guess a detour don't matter much.

DORA (*lightly*)

Unless it takes you where you don't want to go.

(*She takes out her pocketbook*) How much do I owe you?

HELEN

Sixty cents for the butter, and eighty-five for the eggs, a dollar and — and —

KATE

Forty-five.

HELEN (*to Kate*)

When you go I 'll get a slate.

[*Dora puts the money on the table.*

DORA

And thank you very much! Oh! I knew I was forgetting something. I was in Huntington yesterday and I spoke to a dealer there — a rather dreadful person named Weinstein — about that wonderful old curly maple of yours.

HELEN

What about it?

DORA

All about it. He is going to drive over here very soon.

HELEN

What for?

DORA

To buy it, of course.

HELEN

Buy it? It 's a real good bed, and the bureau 's all right if you 're patient when the drawers stick. I wouldn't be able to get along without 'em.

DORA

Oh — I thought you would be glad of the chance of disposing of them.

HELEN

No, I guess not. They were mother's, you see. I don't think I 'd like other folks having them.

DORA

Just tell him so then. I thought you cared more for your parlor furniture.

HELEN

I do; nobody can help liking fine things like my parlor set better than old truck, but being mother's makes a difference.

DORA

Of course it does.

[*She crosses to door.*

HELEN

And you won't forget about bringing your husband to look at the painting?

KATE (*afraid*)

Oh, no!

DORA

I 'll bring him in the very first time we pass this way.

[*She exits*

HELEN (*follows her to door*)

I 'll be a lot obliged.

DORA (*outside*)

Not a bit, good afternoon.

HELEN (*in doorway*)

Good afternoon.

[*She goes to shelf and drops the money in the old jar, then crosses to where Kate stands looking down at her painting. Helen puts her arm about her and they stand together looking at it.*

KATE

It frightens me to have him see it!

HELEN

Because he knows?

KATE

Yes.

HELEN

That 's why I want him to.

KATE

He may just see the faults, not all it 's meant to us!

HELEN

It 's all there! Sometimes it seems like a part of it was mine.

KATE

Of course it is!

HELEN

The hope that was in me, the wanting to see something different to do something bigger!

KATE (*anxiously*)

How can he see all that?

HELEN

It 's there! *I* see it!

[*Tom Lane enters at back, he is angry and shocked. He shuts door behind him.*

TOM

It 's a joke on me, at least if you can call it a joke! They 've closed the road!

HELEN

So Ben Glenny was sayin'.

TOM

A detour out toward Smithtown.

HELEN

Yes.

TOM

And blocked at the other end five miles up!

HELEN

The road needed it bad enough; it 's sort of a bother, but why should you——

KATE (*breaks in*)

Tom! Your garage!

[*She is dismayed.*

TOM

Yes — they got me shut up like I had the smallpox!

HELEN (*shocked*)

I 'm stupid! I didn't think!

TOM

I guess I 'm the stupid one! Anybody that buys gas of me now would have to come for it in an airship.

HELEN

I 'm sorry.

KATE

It 's a shame!

TOM (*bitterly*)

I didn't plant much more than half a crop, countin' on this garage! Thought I was too smart to be a farmer!

KATE

It wasn't your fault! It was a good idea!

TOM

That 's it — damn ideas!

[*He crosses up and looks out window.*

HELEN

Swearin' won't help!

KATE

Don't, mother.

HELEN

It 's hard; nobody can deny that, Tom, especially

when you was countin' on it so much. (*She crosses toward hall door at left*) Don't go down to the Port without seeing me, Kate; I 've got a couple of errands.

[*She exits. Kate crosses up to Tom who stands with back toward her.*

KATE

You 'd put more money into it than you could afford?

TOM (*without turning*)

Yes.

KATE

What will you do?

TOM

What can I do? (*He turns on her*) All the cash I had, and I owe most a thousand that 's past due. I tried to save money by doin' the concrete work myself, and I lost a month; my stock 's been here five weeks and I had it on thirty-day notes. They 've been waitin' for me to open; nobody 's going to wait now!

KATE

You 'll find a way out of it!

TOM

No, I 'm licked!

KATE

I know better!

TOM

Oh, I 'm no milksop, but I *can* be licked. I was half licked even before this, by you!

KATE

How silly!

TOM

I was — I wasn't gettin' anywhere with you, you and your mother planning something together all the time — figuring on something that I didn't know about, that I don't suppose I 'd have known about if you 'd told me!

KATE

Just what we 've always been planning — that I should go away!

TOM

I wasn't going to let you go! Now I can't help myself!

KATE

I hate to say it, but you couldn't have helped it, anyway.

[*There is a knock on the outside door.*

TOM

You don't mean that.

[*The knock is repeated.*

KATE

There 's some one at the door!

TOM

You don't mean that.

[*Kate turns and crosses and opens door. Weinstein, a Jew, a trader in furniture, is in the doorway. He is an elderly, benevolent fellow, not at all grotesque but with much of the inherited instinct of the buyer. He is bland and smiling and extremely gentle in his manner; he speaks with a trace of dialect.*

WEINSTEIN

Mrs. Hardy, she lif here?

KATE

Yes.

WEINSTEIN

I am Weinstein. I haf a store by Huntington. There is some curly maple furniture; I come to see it.

KATE

Grandmother's curly maple! Mrs. Lamont sent you!

WEINSTEIN

She said you haf some old furniture; maybe it ain't so good but I buy effery thing.

KATE

I am almost sure mother won't sell it.

WEINSTEIN

Maybe I gif you something pretty good!

KATE

Oh, I 'll ask her, but I don't think it 's any use. Come in.

[*Weinstein enters, smiling and friendly, bowing politely to Tom, who is still in a bad temper.*

WEINSTEIN

Thank you. Good day, sir.

KATE (*who has crossed to door at left and calls*)

Mother! Mother!

HELEN (*out left*)

Yes.

KATE

Come here a minute.

HELEN (*outside*)

All right.

[*Weinstein has been looking at the furniture with the quick eye of an expert. He puts his hand on the back of a small mahogany rocking chair.*

WEINSTEIN

That 's nice.

KATE

That was Grandma's too.

WEINSTEIN

I buy effery thing.

[*Helen enters.*

HELEN

What is it?

WEINSTEIN (*bowing*)

Good day, lady!

KATE

It 's the man Mrs. Lamont spoke about; he wants to look at Grandma's furniture.

WEINSTEIN

Curly maple bed it was, and a dresser.

HELEN

It 's all a mistake. I 'm sorry you came so far. I don't want to sell it.

KATE

I told him that.

WEINSTEIN

I might look at it?

HELEN

I don't see what good that would do, but I don't mind if you want to.

WEINSTEIN

If it 's good curly maple I like to buy it; if I can't buy it, I like to look at it anyhow.

HELEN

Well, you can't buy it, and I don't know how good it is, I sort of value it for the sentiment.

WEINSTEIN

I buy effery thing! Maybe we look at it now?

HELEN

Lookin' at it won't hurt it; it 's right upstairs.

[*Exit to hall, Helen and Weinstein. Tom crosses down to Kate.*

TOM

You said I couldn't have helped your going away, even if I 'd made good money, like I thought I would?

KATE

No. I am going to New York.

TOM

When?

KATE

When I can. Not for a long time, but I 'm going!

TOM

This summer?

KATE

Not till we can get the money. I don't know when, but it doesn't matter how long it is — I'm going!

TOM

Do you want to go?

KATE

Of course I do.

TOM

I don't know — you don't tell me much — but if it wasn't for *her* you wouldn't go.

KATE

If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't be here at all!

TOM

She wants you to go!

KATE

Because she knows what living in a place like this all your life is like!

TOM

How does she? She knows what it was like for her; she don't know what it will be like for you!

KATE

It 's the same thing.

TOM

She 's stronger than you, she likes fighting better! You 'd be happy here, or anywhere; if you 'd let yourself care about some one — about me!

KATE

I can't, Tom! No!

[*She steps away from him nervously, he follows.*

TOM

You could!

KATE (*desperately*)

No — No—— I don't even want to!

TOM

I 'm in trouble, I 'm going to lose a lot of money — maybe all I 've got — if it wasn't for that I wouldn't let you go — I 'd keep you — in spite of *her!*

KATE

Don't, Tom! Mother 'll hear you!

[*She steps away from him as Helen and Weinstein enter.*

HELEN (*as she enters*)

I don't care! Somehow it wouldn't seem right!

WEINSTEIN

It 's a good offer!

HELEN

Oh, yes, but I couldn't! That set was mother's wedding present! It 's fifty years old! It seems as if it was one of the first things I can remember!

Mostly when I think of her, it 's the way she looked lying there so long.

WEINSTEIN

Vell, I gif you a new bed for it that nobody effer died on.

HELEN

No.

WEINSTEIN

And maybe a hundred dollars!

HELEN

I couldn't.

WEINSTEIN

Even a hundred and fifty!

HELEN

No, I won't. I don't care what you offer! I wouldn't sell it for — (*She stops and turns on him suddenly*) You wouldn't give me three hundred dollars for it, would you!

WEINSTEIN (*steps back in alarm*)

Three hundred dollars!

HELEN

I 'm glad of it! I 'd been sorry, I know.

WEINSTEIN

A hundred and seventy-fife.

HELEN

No.

WEINSTEIN

Vell, it 's too bad. (*He crosses but stops in the door and turns*) Effen two hundred?

HELEN

No.

WEINSTEIN

Vell—— (*He hesitates*) Good-by!

HELEN

Good-by. (*He exits, shutting the outside door*) That shows you what a person will do for money! I 'd have been ashamed always!

TOM (*faces her angrily*)

Kate was tellin' me that she 's going to New York as soon as she can.

HELEN

Yes, she is.

TOM (*bitterly*)

And I was tellin' her that if it wasn't for you she wouldn't ever go.

HELEN

Maybe, but you see there *is* me!

TOM

And there 's *me!* She can't go till she gets the money, and money 's scarce around here!

HELEN

Yes.

TOM

Maybe I 'll have something to say before that time comes!

HELEN

Say it now?

TOM

I can't! You know that!

HELEN

Now 's the time! You want to go, don't you, Kate?

KATE

I told him I did.

TOM

I got a year anyhow! I won't let her go!

[*There is a knock on door.*

HELEN

Wait a minute. (*She crosses and opens door. Weinstein is in doorway with Jake, his helper, who has several old quilts in his arms. Helen looks at him coldly.* What do you want now?

WEINSTEIN

The curly maple.

HELEN

I thought you didn't want to pay me three hundred dollars for it?

WEINSTEIN

I don't, but I got to. Come in, Jake.

[*He enters.*

JAKE

All right, popper.

[*Jake enters — a Jewish boy with a comic likeness to Weinstein.*

HELEN (*looking at Tom*)

You 've got a year anyway, you said, Tom!

WEINSTEIN (*counting money from pocketbook on table*)

Three hundred dollars!

KATE

You 're not going to sell it!

HELEN

Yes—— I am! I 'll move your bed into my room. There 's that old cot you can sleep on to-night—— You 're going to New York to-morrow!

KATE

To-morrow!

[*Helen turns to Weinstein.*

HELEN

Where 's the money! (*She takes it from Weinstein*

and counts) Yes. (*She turns to Kate*) Take him upstairs.

KATE

Without father's knowing?

HELEN

The bed and the dresser! Go along!

KATE

Yes, mother.

[*She crosses to door at left. Weinstein follows.*

WEINSTEIN

Come along, Jakie.

JAKE

Yes, Popper!

[*Jake, Kate, Weinstein exit door left*

TOM (*to Helen*)

You know I was right! You knew I could stop her if I only had a chance! That 's why you took that money!

HELEN

No, I didn't know it. I don't think you could.

TOM

But you weren't sure.

HELEN

No!

TOM

How do you know she 'll be happier there than she 'd be here with me?

HELEN

I don't know much about *there*, Tom. But I know a lot about *here*, so she 's going!

TOM

Nobody 's got a right to spoil another person's life!

HELEN

That 's why I ain't going to let anybody spoil hers! You say you could stop her going if you had another year. Perhaps you could — you live next door, you see her every day and there 's hardly anybody else — and you 're young, and she 's young! Don't I know! Haven't I been through it all! Youth 's all she 's got that 's fine, and you want to take it for yourself! You want to make her stay here and do ugly things, dirty things with her hands, all day long — and I want her to go where she can be big, and free — and use her hands just to make things that 's beautiful.

[*Stephen Hardy enters from outside.*

STEVE

Hardly enough cabbages to pay for pulling. I scarcely made up a truck load between 'em and the beans.

TOM

You saw what they 've done to the road, didn't you?

STEVE

Yes — I guess it won't help you much with your new garage business. I never did believe in it; a man 's a farmer or he ain't!

TOM

It 's deeper than that. A man 's a fool or he ain't. I guess it 's easy enough to tell about me!

[*Weinstein's voice is heard out left.*

WEINSTEIN (*outside*)

Easy now! Hold your end vay up! (*At the sound Steve turns and looks at door in amazement. Weinstein's voice goes on*) Hold your end vay up, Jakey!

JAKEY (*outside*)
All right, Popper.

STEVE
Who 's that?

HELEN
It 's the man from Huntington; he buys furniture. I sold him a couple of things.

[*Kate enters and holds the door open. She is followed by Weinstein and Jake, who carry the headboard of a wooden bed covered by one of their old quilts.*

KATE
Be careful of the door!

WEINSTEIN
Careful, Jakie!

JAKE
All right, Popper.

[*As they start to cross the stage, Stephen steps forward and speaks.*

STEVE
What you got there?

WEINSTEIN
Vot?

[*He is carrying his end of the bed in such a way as to practically place himself behind the bed so that he can't see Stephen.*

STEVE (*repeats sternly*)
What you got there?

WEINSTEIN
Vot?

[*He lowers his end suddenly.*

JAKE
Look out, Popper!

[*He catches it.*

WEINSTEIN (*sees Stephen*)

Excuse me. I didn't see you!

STEVE (*to Helen*)

What 'd you sell this man?

HELEN

The bed and the dresser from our room.

STEVE

Have you gone crazy!

HELEN

No.

STEVE (*to Weinstein*)

Take it upstairs again.

WEINSTEIN

I bought them of the lady!

STEVE

You 'll get your money back; do as I tell you.

WEINSTEIN

But——

HELEN

I sold 'em to him, Stephen!

STEVE

Put it back! This is my house!

HELEN

'T was mother's and she gave it to me, and I 've sold it!

STEVE (*to Weinstein*)

I wouldn't advise you to make any trouble here, not with me! I tell you to take that thing upstairs!

WEINSTEIN

It was a fair bargain.

STEVE (*bitterly*)

Fair! What does your kind know about fairness?

You come here when you see there 's no man around and start to strip my house, leave me without a bed to sleep in! We 've had talk enough. (*He steps forward angrily*) You'd better put it back!

HELEN

I 'm going to move Kate's bed in our room; and he 's a fool if he puts it back, because it 's his and I 'm going to keep what I got.

STEVE

I suppose you *want* to be robbed! That set 's worth money! Nevin's wife sold an old bed and dresser no better n' that a while ago for almost a hundred dollars.

HELEN

I know, she was always flighty. (*She holds up her roll of bills*) I sold mine for three hundred.

STEVE (*in awe*)

Three — hundred!

HELEN

Dollars!

STEVE

Three hundred!

WEINSTEIN (*looking at him anxiously*)

Vell?

HELEN

Go on.

[*She nods toward the door. Jake and Weinstein exit with the bed.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

The Hardy's side porch a few hours later. The porch, which is not raised above the stage level, takes up the greater part of the stage. Over this porch is a pagoda-like roof above which the second-story windows of the house are shown. A door and a window at right of the door open onto the kitchen. On the porch are two chairs, a small table, and a bench. At left of porch a fence makes a turning, as though here was a sharp curve in the highway; a tree is near by, and just inside of this fence and on this tree the detour sign. A gate just above this opens into the back yard. In this scene everything must be sacrificed to the acting space which is the porch itself.

At rise of curtain, Stephen Hardy, a pipe in his mouth, sits alone on the porch, he is thoughtful and silent, he just sits slowly puffing at his pipe. In a moment Tom Lane enters in the road at back, walking slowly. He enters the yard through the gate and steps onto porch. Steve glances at him without moving.

STEVE

Oh.

[*Tom sits, takes out his pipe and fills it but makes no answer and hunts in his pocket for a match.*

TOM

Light?

[*Steve throws him a box of matches, Tom lights his pipe and tosses them back; both smoke in silence.*

STEVE

Ought to cut that field of yours down by this fence — it 'll spoil on you.

TOM

Yes. (*For a moment they puff away*) Steve — I'm in a hell of a mess!

STEVE

Yes?

TOM

Yes!

STEVE

Talkin' won't help it. (*There is a pause*) You don't half farm your place lately; seems like you had something better to do. Maybe you got too much land. I don't know but I 'd like to own that twenty acres of yours — joinin' onto mine.

TOM

You can.

STEVE

You mean that?

TOM

Yes, you 've always thought you could do more 'n I could with it.

STEVE

I 'd lay it out different. I 've had my eye on it ever since I was a boy.

TOM

I always thought you had. Well . . . if I 've got to sell, I 'd rather it would be yours than anybody's.

STEVE

All that bothers me is cash.

TOM (*alarmed*)
I need cash bad.

STEVE
What 's the twenty acres worth?

TOM
Six thousand.

STEVE
Five 's enough, two-fifty an acre.

TOM
It 's time more 'n it 's price with me. You want that land?

STEVE (*earnestly*)
Yes — I do!

TOM
You can have it for five thousand.

STEVE
It 's the cash bothers me!

TOM
I telephoned the jobber to New York just now an' I asked him for an extension on my note; he wouldn't do anything. I offered him his stock back and he laughed at me! He 's going to get out an attachment, if he ain't already.

STEVE
That 's bad!

TOM
What 's the most cash you could raise for me to-day?

STEVE
Five hundred.

TOM
It wouldn't help! (*He sits back and draws on his pipe*) My pipe 's out!

STEVE (*tosses him box of matches*)

Here! (*Tom relights pipe*) I 'd pay another five hundred in four weeks; my potatoes will fetch that.

TOM

It 's to-day I want it. I 'll sell you my twenty acres for five thousand — that 's fifteen hundred cash above what it 's mortgaged for, and you can let the mortgage stand.

STEVE

Five hundred is every cent I 've got in the bank, an' I was figuring that for something else.

TOM

Then we can't trade.

[*For a moment they both smoke in silence.*

STEVE

Gimme back my matches! (*Tom tosses them to him and he puts them in his pocket*) Gimme two days to raise this money?

TOM

Two hours.

STEVE

I 'll try! (*He rises from his chair*) I only got one chance; wait till I telephone.

[*He exits into kitchen, Tom sits in thought. Helen's face is seen for a moment as she glances out of window from the kitchen. A moment later she comes to the open doorway; she has evidently been baking, as her arms are covered with flour, and as she speaks to Tom, she wipes them on her apron.*

HELEN

What 's *he* calling Ben Glenny for on the telephone?

TOM

He didn't say.

[*Helen opens the screen door and steps out on porch.*

HELEN

Nothin 's upsets me more 'n his law business with Ben Glenny! Ben 's all right as a man, but a body can't seem to think of him like he was human. To me he always seems sort of a walking calamity!

TOM

Ben ain't got no law business! He never was admitted to the bar!

HELEN

He 's County Clerk, Notary Public and most everything, especially Tax Collector. Last time he was here I told him as long as he *was* Tax Collector I didn't know but what it would be more convenient if I was to arrange to board him.

TOM

That 's like the sort of things you 're always sayin'! Things you don't mean, and you know folks know you don't mean. You say 'em just because they seem kind of funny to you.

HELEN

I s'pose so——

TOM

It 's sort of an aggravatin' habit.

HELEN

So *he 's* told me, often!

TOM

Excuse me for speakin' of it.

HELEN

Oh, I don't mind! It 's just my way of being impolite, like you smokin' your pipe on my porch without askin' me if you could.

TOM

Oh!

[*He knocks the ashes out of his pipe hastily and drops it in his pocket.*

HELEN

You didn't have to stop. I ain't goin' to.

TOM

I guess you couldn't.

HELEN

I guess not — I get so tired of sayin' nothin' but just exactly what 's so, and listen to folks that don't ever mean the least mite more 'n they say, or the least mite less! What 's the use of your imagination!

TOM

Mine? I ain't got any, have I?

HELEN

Oh, I guess so — but it 's like a muscle; it gets awful puny if you don't use it.

TOM

I 'd rather have one real dollar than dream I was a millionaire!

HELEN

I s'pose so — I 'd rather have one real dream than *be* a millionaire!

TOM

Well, it 's all right so long as we 're both satisfied. Where 's Kate?

HELEN

At the Port, buying some things.

TOM

Did you mean what you said a while ago — that she was goin' to New York to-morrow.

HELEN
No.

TOM
Just another dream?

HELEN
She 's goin' to-night.

TOM
To-night! When did you settle on that?

HELEN
Just a minute ago — (*She looks at him*) I happened to think of something that frightened me.

TOM
If I was her father I wouldn't let her go.

HELEN
I believe you; you 're a lot like Steve——

TOM
I hope so, Steve Hardy 's a sensible man, and an honest man!

HELEN
And a good man. Never was wild in his life, an' he 's truthful, and he never drank or gambled.

TOM
I know.

HELEN
And you never did.

TOM
Never wanted to.

HELEN
That 's a comfort.

TOM
A lot of good it does me! You don't want her to marry me.

HELEN
No.

TOM
Why?

HELEN
Oh, I guess it 's because she 's got too much of what I used to be in her.

TOM
If I 'm like him, and she 's like you, why can't we be married same as you was?

HELEN
I said she was like what I *used* to be.

TOM
If you ask me I 'd say it 's *him* she takes after. (*Helen laughs*) She does! She 's slower thinkin', like him, and more set, more contented. She 's quieter than you, and she ain't so smart.

HELEN
You flatter me!

TOM (*seriously*)
That ain't how I meant it. She 's just what I like; that 's why I don't want her to go. I want to marry her; I been figurin' on it two years.

HELEN
That 's longer than you 've been planning your garage!

TOM
Yes, I been so busy buildin' the garage I ain't seen much of her.

HELEN
But it wouldn't have done to neglect the garage.

TOM
No.

HELEN

There 's something in the Bible about trying to serve two masters. (*Steve enters from kitchen and sits*) What did you want of Ben Glenny?

STEVE

Money!

HELEN

You 've got more imagination than I gave you credit for.

STEVE

He 's goin' to drive around pretty soon.

HELEN (*alarmed*)

You ain't tryin' to raise more money on this place?

STEVE

I 'm tryin' to.

[*She looks at him and sighs at the hopelessness of it as Kate comes rapidly along the road and enters gaily through the gate. She has with her a long cardboard box, a hat box and several small packages. As she turns a corner of the house and sees them, she stops for a moment, startled.*

KATE

Oh!

STEVE

Been down to the Port?

KATE

Yes.

STEVE

To Neppers?

KATE (*evasively*)

I was there for a minute — yes.

STEVE

It didn't take you long to learn the stock.

KATE

I — I ——

STEVE (*rises, sternly*)

What is it? You 're hidin' somethin'!

KATE (*desperately*)

Mother! Doesn't he know?

HELEN

It 's all right, dear! (*She puts her hand on Kate's shoulder and turns to Steve*) She ain't going to work for Nepper this year, Stephen; she 's going to New York.

STEVE

No.

HELEN

She 's going to study art.

STEVE

That 's nonsense!

HELEN

We don't think so!

STEVE

Think! That 's the trouble with yer, both of yer; you don't think!

HELEN

Maybe not, but we feel a lot.

STEVE

Study *art!*

HELEN

Yes.

STEVE

I won't have it!

HELEN

I made my mind up to it, whether I think or I don't, over ten years ago. It 's just as much a part of

my life — what I 've planned she 's goin' to do and be — as the work I do is, or this old dress that I 've worn and worn and worn until I wouldn't know myself in any other. I couldn't any more live without the hope of what 's coming to her than I could live without drink or food.

STEVE

She 's my child as much as she 's yours!

HELEN

No, not quite so much. She 's your daughter, but I guess I did a little more for her than you did.

STEVE

When was you plannin' for her to go?

HELEN

To-night!

KATE (*startled*)

To-night, mother?

HELEN

Yes. Mary Barton 's going up on the six o'clock train. She was here just after you left. She is going visitin' her sister way up town in New York, an' she said she could keep you over night just as well as not.

STEVE

What would she do to-morrow?

HELEN

That Mr. Lamont, an artist, that 's taken the bungalow for the summer, is goin' to tell us the names of the best teachers — his wife promised — and the Y. W. C. A. folks in New York will help her find a place to board.

STEVE

How long before she comes back?

HELEN (*bitterly*)
Here!

STEVE
Yes.

HELEN
That 's for her to say — I been workin' a long time; she 's got to do the rest.

STEVE
What 's the sense of it, I can't see. Can you, Tom?

TOM
There ain't any.

STEVE
There! You heard that?

HELEN (*wearily*)
I wasn't listenin'!

TOM
I guess she heard me right enough, only I guess she thinks it ain't any of my business.

STEVE
It could be easy enough; I always thought 't would be! I thought, seein' you two together so much, that sooner or later you 'd ask her to marry you.

TOM
I did.

HELEN
And she said no.

STEVE (*angrily*)
She did.

TOM (*spitefully*)
She didn't — she wouldn't say yes, but she never really said no, so as a fellar would know she meant it! The *no* come from somewhere's else!

STEVE

What do you mean?

TOM

From her!

[*He looks at Helen bitterly.*

STEVE

Hold on. Let 's get the rights of this!

HELEN

That 's easy. Do you s'pose I 'd try to make her do anything she didn't want to do.

TOM

Yes, I do.

STEVE

She can't! I guess I figure in this!

HELEN

I wouldn't! Kate!

KATE

Yes, mother!

HELEN

You 've heard them — I want you to tell your father the truth!

TOM

One way or the other. You know what I want you to say. I may be in hard luck now, but I won't be always. I 'm a man that means to get ahead!

STEVE

And he will! I know Tom. I want you to answer him, Kate!

HELEN

And so do I! He offers you one thing — I guess you know what it is — all 's you 've got to do is to open your eyes and look around you.

STEVE

What are you offerin' her that 's so much better? Just what is it?

HELEN

It 's hard to say — just in words, but I think she knows.

STEVE

Well, I don't know!

HELEN

Tom here said a while ago I was always dreaming — that 's so I guess — (*She turns to Kate with a sudden overflow of great tenderness*) And that 's what I 'm offerin' you, my dear! One of my dreams — come true.

KATE

And I 'm going to take it, mother, and make it true.

HELEN

I knew you was. (*She puts one hand on Kate's shoulder and faces them*) There are times when I 've got courage enough to laugh even at a *man!* (*She turns to Kate*) Now you run upstairs. There 's lots for you to do if you 're goin' to-night.

KATE

But father?

HELEN

I 've tried hard to be a good wife to him, I guess he knows that. I hope he doesn't think that because I never made a real fight before that I ain't got the spirit to make one now. You run along — I 'll tend to everything.

KATE

Yes, mother.

[*She exits.*

STEVE

You talk big. Where 's the money comin' from? Three hundred dollars won't last forever!

HELEN

We got a little more.

STEVE

How much?

HELEN

Just a little we saved up.

STEVE

Seems like I was the only one around this place that couldn't save nothin'. Seems like what happened to a girl like that was more important than what happened to me! We 'll talk about this again after I see Ben Glenny, but I don't want you to think I 'm going to stand for any nonsense.

[*He exits at left around the house.*

TOM (*with rather malicious pleasure*)

He 's mad!

HELEN

He 'll get over it.

TOM (*doubtfully*)

I don't know!

HELEN

You 've never been married. If you had you 'd know there ain't anything else for married folks to do.

TOM

I don't blame him none for bein' mad!

HELEN

It 's natural. He thinks he ought to be let to say what Kate does with her life.

TOM

Of course.

HELEN

Because it 's right that every man should be the master, and decide things that really matter. Women ought to just cook, and clean, and sew, and maybe chop a little wood, and have the babies.

TOM

That 's how God meant it to be.

HELEN

And if a woman sometimes gets to thinkin' it ain't quite fair, if she sets herself to sort of change things a little, she 's flyin' in the face of Providence!

TOM

I look at it like this — a fellar ought not to be hard on a woman if she kinder fusses once in a while.

HELEN

So long as she ain't let to *do* anything?

TOM

That 's it!

HELEN

That idea ain't original, is it?

TOM (*suspiciously*)

Whatter you mean?

HELEN

You borrowed it!

TOM

Who from?

HELEN

Adam!

[*She exits to house and through the window she is seen for a moment at her kitchen work. Tom turns sulkily and crosses left as Dora Lamont crosses in from left on the road.*

DORA

Oh, Mr. Tom! I was on my way to see you!

[*Tom crosses to her and they stand with the fence between them.*

TOM

There ain't much use my hangin' around my place with the road blocked. (*He points angrily at the detour sign on the tree*) This is as far as anybody can go.

DORA

That 's what I wanted to talk to you about. They have put this barricade up, but the workmen aren't here yet.

TOM

They 've been here and gone. Nobody 's goin' to do any hurryin' about this job, you know; it 's the taxpayers' money.

DORA

My husband wants you to let our car out of your garage and bring it up to the bungalow right away.

TOM

Oh!

DORA

You could lift that barricade away, couldn't you?

TOM

Yes, I could.

DORA

Well? What is it?

TOM

Nothin', only you see your car was all I had, the only one — I sort of hate to part with it.

DORA (*smiling*)

That 's about the way we feel about it.

TOM

I know. I 'll bring it up.

DORA

I 'm sorry, but after all you have that great big farm!

TOM

Oh, I 'm all right.

DORA

That 's good. We 'll expect the car some time to-day.

TOM

You 'll get it.

[*Dora exits at left the same way she came. Tom stands for a moment in gloomy thought as Kate enters to the porch from the kitchen. Kate has put on her pretty new dress — quite modern in cut — and with it she has put on a new air of coquetry as though she had suddenly blossomed into womanhood and rejoiced in its power.*

KATE

Hello, Tom!

TOM

Kate! (*He steps toward her quite overwhelmed*) Kate! What you been doin' to yourself?

KATE

Oh, just trying on my new dress.

TOM

Yes — yes — I see!

[*He turns away as if to go.*

KATE

Tom? (*He takes another step and she speaks louder*) Tom!

TOM

Well?

[*He stops but he doesn't turn.*

KATE

Turn around here, Tom Lane! (*He turns slowly and faces her*) Aren't you going to tell me how you like it?

TOM

About as much as the fellar likes to hear the Judge say, "And may God have mercy on your soul."

KATE (*hurt*)

You 're spoiling everything!

TOM (*sadly*)

Something is, right enough.

KATE

The only decent dress I ever had.

TOM

I didn't say it was pretty — I didn't say how I thought you looked in it — I didn't dare to.

KATE

Why not?

TOM

I ain't an artist — artists like things that are pretty just because they *are* pretty — I don't care nothin' about 'em unless they 're *mine!*

KATE (*archly*)

Meaning the dress?

TOM

You know well enough what I mean!

KATE

Yes, I know. I 'm sorry, Tom! I don't want to go away — with you hating me! You 're mad with me now, and I know how hard it is for you to for-

give anybody that makes you mad — but, Tom — you 're not going to be angry with me always.

TOM

A lot you 'd care! How much will you think about this place, or anybody here, once you get out of it!

KATE (*shocked*)

Why! There 's father — and mother!

TOM (*darkly*)

I know, plenty of girls get to be ashamed of their folks!

KATE

I wouldn't, and of course I couldn't help thinking about you sometimes. Tom, remembering things — we 've been such good friends.

TOM

It don't take long to lose a friend.

KATE

You 're blaming me because I 'm going!

TOM (*bitterly*)

No! I 'm blaming *her!*

KATE

You mustn't! All that 's good I 've ever had she gave me.

TOM

Maybe it won't be so good as you two think it will.

KATE (*frightened*)

You think I 'm going to fail.

TOM

All I 'm thinkin' about is if you 'd stayed here we 'd have been happy.

KATE

Not unless — unless I 'd — I 'd cared.

TOM

She wouldn't let you care!

KATE

You just won't *try* to understand! This is something mother 's planned for me all my life. I can't *help* doing it.

TOM

Your mother gets ideas!

KATE

She used to sit by my bed, in the dark, and talk about it when I was a little girl. Daytimes she 'd take me walking with her and point out the pretty places in the woods, and the colors in the sky, and show me how different they were, and how wonderful. How could I help getting so I wanted to paint them? How can I help wanting to go where some one can teach me to be what she 's so hungry for me to be?

TOM

I guess you couldn't, not unless it was like you said. Unless you cared about somebody else more 'n you do about her.

KATE

And I don't! If I did, I 'd hate myself!

TOM

It 's all right! I ain't goin' to take no advantage, I ain't goin' to try to keep you — but I could!

KATE

No!

TOM

Oh, yes, I could! Your father 'd stop your goin', quick enough, if I was to tell him a few things.

KATE

I don't know what you 're talking about!

TOM

I guess he 'd say if you was in love with me you couldn't go, and if you weren't in love with me — and he knew about your lettin' me kiss you four or five times, like I did last winter, and your puttin' your arms around my neck — then I guess he 'd say he wouldn't trust you out of his sight.

KATE

You 'd tell him that — when you begged me so — when I was so lonesome!

TOM

I don't say I 'll tell him, but it 's a satisfaction knowin' I could stop this thing if I wasn't so sort of sentimental.

KATE (*angrily*)

I 'd go now, no matter what you told him! If he said I couldn't go, I 'd run away!

TOM (*thoughtfully*)

You 've got spirit in you once in a while like your mother's. I wonder if maybe you don't favor her more 'n I figured you did!

[*Ben Glenny is seen to enter at left on the road. He looks off right, back of house, as if he saw Stephen there, and calls.*

BEN

Hello, Steve!

[*Stephen answers from right, back of house.*

STEVE

I been waitin' for you!

KATE

They 'll be here in a minute. Come in with me, Tom; I want to talk to you.

TOM

You needn't worry, I ain't going to tell on you!

KATE

It is n't that, but I won't see you again, and I don't want to have to remember you like this!

TOM

No, you 'll give me one kiss, I suppose, and you 'll think it 's damned funny if I don't think anything you want to do is right.

KATE

I 'm going in, you can suit yourself!

[*She exits, to kitchen; after a second's sulky hesitation he follows. Steve has joined Ben Glenny at gate and they cross downstage together.*

STEVE

Well?

BEN

I saw both of them.

STEVE

Sit down.

[*They sit.*

BEN

It 's hot walkin'.

[*He wipes the perspiration from his face with a cotton handkerchief.*

STEVE

Saw both of 'em?

BEN

Yes.

STEVE

Already? That looks bad; funny how much quicker a man says no than he 'll say yes!

BEN

Both of 'em says your farm won't stand any more borrowin' on. Billings said you had so many mortgages on it now he didn't see where you found any room to raise crops. He was sort of jokin'.

STEVE

He 's a fool!

BEN

Allers was.

STEVE

But he 's got the money and I haven't!

BEN

And he keeps what he 's got, and you don't.

STEVE

I ain't throwed away a dollar in twenty years, not so much as fifteen cents for a movin' picture!

BEN

You 're land hungry!

STEVE

I 've *got* to get more land! I 'm bound to do it! I 've got to get fifteen hundred dollars.

BEN

I wish you 'd get the three hundred and seven you owe for taxes. I 'm way back in my collectin'.

STEVE

I got it in the bank. But I was figurin' to use it to buy Tom Lane's twenty acres, if I could raise the balance.

BEN

And you need a thousand?

STEVE

Yes. It 's a chance I won't get again. If Tom 's sold up for what he owes, the land 's gone for good,

an' if he pulls through an' makes money with his garage, he wouldn't want to sell.

BEN

They was some talk about Tom Lane an' your girl Kate's runnin' around together. That 'd be one way of gettin' that land in your family.

STEVE

I stopped dependin' on a woman the day I was weaned.

BEN

Well, I can't do nothin' fer yer. (*He rises*) I tried.

STEVE

You ain't got money enough to lend it to me yourself?

BEN

No, I ain't! Bein' a tax collector, an' process server an' county clerk has sort of made me lose confidence in home folks. I don't pretend to know more 'n anybody else, but I 'm savin' up all my money an' buyin' oil stocks. (*He starts left*) Sorry I couldn't do nothin' for you, Steve.

STEVE

I didn't have much faith in your gettin' it, but 't was my only chance.

BEN

Well if you 'd got it I s'pose 'twould have been all the harder for me to get your taxes out of yer.

STEVE

Maybe — but I 'd of had the land.

BEN

Well — good day. It 's some hot.

STEVE

An' we need rain — good day, Ben.

[*Ben exits out gate and along the road at left. Steve sits in deep thought. Helen comes to window and looks out, then crosses to door and standing back of the screen door, she speaks.*

HELEN

I heard Ben Glenny's voice.

STEVE

Yes.

HELEN

You didn't get the money you wanted out of him?

STEVE

No.

HELEN

I am sorry if you 're disappointed.

STEVE

Come out a minute, I want to talk to yer.

[*Helen opens the screen door and steps out on porch.*

HELEN

Kate an' Tom Lane are in the parlor. She ought to be packin' her trunk; you 'll have to take it to the station.

STEVE

You get three hundred dollars for that old truck of your mother's?

HELEN

Yes.

STEVE

And I 've got five hundred in the bank. I 'm going to ask Tom if he 'll take eight hundred and my note for the balance.

HELEN

You 're goin' to give Tom Lane my three hundred dollars?

STEVE

If he 'll take it.

HELEN

No.

STEVE

He 's *got* to take it! He would, I know, if we was to get Kate to ask him.

HELEN

You don't mean that!

STEVE

Yes.

HELEN

You 'd do a thing like that just for more land?

STEVE

For *that* land!

HELEN

I 've been a slave to land ever since I married you; I 'm tired of it!

STEVE

You ain't been any more of a slave than I 've been! You 're a good worker, but you ain't worked like I do! There ain't a foot of this land here I ain't watered with my sweat!

HELEN

And you want more, and it 's all you do want! More work for you and for me, more taxes and mortgages hangin' over us.

STEVE

I want a *farm!* I 'm bound to get it! I 'm no damned Japanese! I tell you this is my chance!

HELEN

It 's Kate's chance too, Steve. You 're forgettin'

that! You wouldn't take her chance away from her?

STEVE

Yes — I would. I 'm goin' to!

HELEN

I won't let you — that 's all — I just won't! (*He rises without a word and crosses into the house. She looks distressed and anxious. In a moment he returns, in his hand the jug in which is the money and the dusty bunch of artificial flowers. As she sees this in his hand, she steps back almost in terror*) Stephen!

STEVE

There 's money here. I always knew you kept somethin' in here, but it was no business of mine! That three hundred dollars is here?

HELEN (*nervously*)

Yes.

STEVE

There 's more, too; it 's heavy!

[*He shakes the jar and the sound of the silver is heard.*

HELEN

All that 's there is mine and Kate's.

STEVE

How much?

HELEN

You said just now that what I kept in there wasn't any business of yours, and it ain't!

STEVE

How much?

HELEN

If I 've got any rights at all! If you 've got any

bit of feelin' left for me, or for what I ask of you, I want you to put that down!

[*By way of answer, he throws the artificial flowers contemptuously aside, and turning the jug up he pours the contents out on the table.*

STEVE (*as he sees*) By God!

HELEN

It 's just like you struck me in the face.

[*She drops into chair, hiding her eyes with her fingers. He counts the money eagerly and with growing joy and excitement.*

STEVE

Over a thousand dollars!

HELEN

More 'n ten years I done without — I made *her* do without! Many a time I took her teachin' money when she wanted a pretty dress, an' I cried myself to sleep that night — but I took it!

STEVE

With my five hundred it 'll be enough! Tom 's in the parlor, you say? (*He crosses to door of kitchen and calls*) Tom! Tom! I want you!

[*As he turns back, Helen springs between him and the table.*

HELEN

Don't shame me before them, Steve, don't.

STEVE (*sternly*)

I want you not to make a fuss now, Helen.

HELEN

I tried to be a good wife to you all these hard, hard years. Once before I had money — I 'd saved it, just like I saved this — 't was like a key — a key to the door that was shuttin' me out from life —

and I gave it up, for you — because you made me love you — when I didn't want to. Now, when I ain't got anything but that, too — don't make me hate you!

[*Tom and Kate enter from the kitchen. Kate looks at her father and mother with dismay.*

KATE

What is it?

STEVE

I 'll take that offer of yours, Tom. We 'll get Ben Glenny to draw up a bill of sale. Fifteen hundred cash and a mortgage for the balance!

HELEN (*to Kate*)

It 's your money! He 's takin' it.

KATE

Father!

HELEN

You 'll waste your time beggin' him! He 's a hard man!

TOM (*to Steve*)

You 're goin' to buy my land?

STEVE

Yes.

HELEN (*turns desperately to Tom*)

Tom! You won't take it; tell him you won't take it, knowin' what it means to me an' Kate!

KATE

Of course he won't take it, mother!

STEVE

Why won't he? He needs it, don't he? Course he 'll take it, won't you, Tom?

KATE (*proudly*)

He won't!

TOM

I want the money and he wants the land. I don't see no reason why I shouldn't take it.

KATE (*scornfully*)

After the way you were just talking to me in there?

[*She points to house.*

TOM

Buyin' land, or sellin' it is a matter of business.

HELEN (*to Kate*)

We might have known he would!

STEVE

I 'll telephone fer Ben Glenny!

[*He steps towards table, putting out his hand for the money.*

HELEN (*steps in front of him*)

You 're a thief, Steve Hardy!

STEVE

Helen!

[*He draws back, horrified.*

HELEN

Just a thief! A common thief! Ain't you robbed me always — of my youth — of my life — of my looks — I ain't forty — and look at me — look what you 've done to me! You thief — and now it 's her!

STEVE

Nobody ever called me a name like that! Nobody ever dared!

HELEN

Why should I be afraid? What more could you do to me!

STEVE

You can't call me a thief! This is *my* house; what 's in it is mine, all of it!

HELEN

My mother's furniture wasn't yours!

STEVE

It 's been part of the furnishin' of my house for twenty years. Of course it 's mine! So 's the rest of this money!

HELEN

The savings out of her salary, teachin' school and tendin' store!

STEVE

She 's my daughter, and she ain't of age!

HELEN

And ten years of savin' dime by dime out of my egg and chicken money!

STEVE

That 's the thanks I get fer lettin' you call 'em yours — the hens was mine!

HELEN

Everything is yours!

STEVE

Of course it is!

HELEN

And I get my keep! I haven't had a dress in two years, and then one I made myself. I get my food, but I have to cook it first. Where else would you get a cook who 'd work like I work and only get her keep! They ain't but one way to get a girl as cheap as that, and that 's to marry her!

KATE

Like Tom Lane wanted to marry me!

HELEN

The summer folks here pay a cook seventy-five dollars a month who 'd be too proud to do the work I

do! That Mrs. Lamont paid an agent ten dollars just for *gettin'* her a cook! That shows how smart you are, Steve Hardy; alls you paid was one dollar for a weddin' license!

STEVE (*putting money back into jar*)

You 're callin' pretty hard names, wife, and I ain't a patient man!

HELEN

I 've been a patient woman, but I can't be any more! Kate! (*She throws her arms about her*) I don't seem like I could stand it!

KATE (*clinging to her*)

Don't, mother! Don't! You break my heart!

STEVE

What 's all the fuss about! Why not let her stay here, same as all the other girls, an' marry a decent man like Tom?

HELEN

Another wife — to another man like you!

STEVE

Better maybe than sendin' a young girl like she is out alone to mix with strangers in a place like New York City.

HELEN

Why is it? Why? How *could* it be?

STEVE

How do you know what would become of her?

HELEN

How could I know? I only know what would become of her here!

STEVE

You never thought about the other thing, did you!

About who she might meet, alone there — about what she might get to be.

HELEN

She might get to be a great artist, like I 've prayed she would.

STEVE

And she might get to be a woman of the streets!

HELEN

And if she did would she sell herself as cheap as I did! Would she fall any lower than I am? She 'd have had her chance; win or lose, she 'd have had it, she 'd have had some hours, anyway, somethin' to remember!

STEVE (*shocked*)

You mean then that like *that* she 'd be better off than you 've been here with me!

HELEN

Yes!

STEVE

All right! My house is no place for you, not if you feel like that. (*He holds the jug out to her*) You claim this money.

HELEN

I do! I 'll keep on claimin' it!

STEVE

Take it, then, but remember this — if you do take it, and if she goes against my will — you go with her!

KATE

Father!

STEVE (*to Helen*)

You go, and you don't come back.

HELEN

Wait — we got to understand each other! You 're turnin' me out!

STEVE

You always claimed to be smarter than I was. I guess you got my meanin'!

HELEN

Oh, yes, I got that long ago — that everything must be for you, an' nothin' for me! The only thing you ever gave me was your name, I bought that from you when I was young. I paid you for it with all I had — now I ain't young, any more, an' you 're sick of your bargain — you want to call it off. I wish to God you could — I 'd give you back your name if you 'd give me back what I paid for it!

STEVE

Just words! That 's all! You heard mine! If she goes — you go!

KATE

You don't mean it, father! You *can't!*

STEVE (*to Helen*)

I 'm going to let you choose!

HELEN

All right! There 's a train at seven!

[*She puts her arm about Kate and they turn and exit to the kitchen.*

CURTAIN

ACT III

Scene: Hardy's kitchen (same as Act I) about an hour later.

Stephen, his pipe in his mouth, sits moodily by stove. Tom Lane, also with a pipe, stands in open doorway to the hall, shamelessly listening.

TOM

Wait a minute! (*He bends eagerly out into hall, Stephen rises from his chair and stands looking at door. In a moment Tom turns back into room*) No, they 're movin' around all right, but they ain't comin' down.

STEPHEN

Oh!

[*He drops back into chair.*

TOM (*contemptuously*)

And you 're going to let 'em go!

STEPHEN

I ain't goin' to stop 'em.

TOM

You could — if you was to show a little spirit!

STEPHEN

It 's for them to say; only if they go they can't come back — not ever!

TOM

As far as that goes, maybe they 'd never want to. (*He hears a sound*) Wait! They 're movin' again! (*He puts his head out into hall. Steve looks at him*

but does not again get up. In a moment Tom turns back) What do you s'pose I heard 'em doin'?

STEVE

Cryin'?

TOM

Singin'!

STEVE

No!

TOM

Yes! And not hymns — *tunes!* I guess you can take a rest from feelin' like you was Simon Legree beatin' Uncle Tom to death! Looks to me like they was glad they was goin'!

STEVE (*sternly*)

Then it 's best they went!

TOM

It 's a serious thing when a man's wife leaves him!

STEVE

Yes.

TOM

It 's *awful* when she takes a thousand dollars with her!

STEVE

Yes.

[*He smokes in silence. Tom sits moodily in chair.*

TOM

If they was mine they wouldn't go!

STEVE (*coldly*)

Well — they ain't.

TOM (*a little resentful*)

I got to give you credit for one thing; everything you say is always true, even if it ain't very interestin'.

STEVE (*thoughtfully*)
It takes a lot of patience to get along with any woman.

TOM
Seems so.

STEVE
She had her faults.

TOM
I know it.

STEVE
In most ways she 's been a good wife to me.

TOM
She 'd ought to be.

STEVE
I ain't defendin' her.

TOM
She was the kind I couldn't 'a got along with.

STEVE
Why couldn't you? You wanted to marry Kate!

TOM
She ain't like her mother, she 's the "spit and image" of you.

STEVE
Kate?

TOM (*losing confidence*) Leastways I always thought so.

STEVE
If you don't know no more about an automobile than you do about a woman, I guess it 's just as well they closed the road.
[*He turns disgusted.*

TOM
Hark! (*He rises suddenly*) Some one 's on the

stairs! (*He crosses and looks out to hall, then turns in great excitement*) Yes! Now we 'll know!

STEVE

What will we know?

TOM

If they 're really goin'! I bet they ain't.

STEVE

Humph!

[*Tom sits; in a moment Kate and Helen enter. Between them they carry a trunk, and Helen has an old cardboard box under one arm. They pay not the slightest attention to the men but put the trunk down left of center two or three feet away from where Steve is sitting.*

HELEN

Now we 'll get the trays.

KATE (*without glancing at Tom or Steve, who sit stolidly smoking their pipes*) It 's too bad they 're no men in the house to help us.

HELEN (*sniffs scornfully*)

You don't smell anything peculiar, do you?

KATE (*doubtfully*)

I don't know!

HELEN

I s'pose it was that awful imagination of mine; of *course* nobody would smoke in my kitchen!

[*Helen and Kate exit to hall.*

TOM

They *are* goin'!

STEVE

After this I ain't *never* comin' in here without I smoke!

TOM

Yes, sir! They 're goin'!

STEVE

What time is it?

TOM

You asked me that twice already! What do you care; you never do nothin'!

STEVE (*wistfully*)

We used to eat at six.

TOM

Well, it 's about that now. Who 's going to get your meals for you?

STEVE

It don't take no brains to cook! I can run a house as good as a woman. I ain't going to have no hired girl; I 'll do for myself!

TOM

Anybody can; it 's nothin' to make a fuss about.

STEVE (*anxiously*)

I don't s'pose she 'll take her cook book?

TOM

What if she does? All you need is a little common sense and a good appetite.

STEVE

You said 't was six, didn't yer?

TOM

There 's a clock right in front of yer!

[*They sit back puffing at pipes. Helen and Kate enter; in their hands they carry the two trays of the trunk.*

HELEN

Wait, I 'll open it.

[*She puts the tray on the floor and opens trunk.*

Kate puts her tray in. Helen sniffs at the tobacco smoke and crosses and opens the window directly back of Tom's chair, then goes and opens door; a strong wind outside blows the window curtains and the draft annoys both Tom and Steve.

KATE (*takes a deep breath*)

Ah! That 's better!

HELEN (*pleasantly*)

It 'll air the room.

KATE (*with a cold look at Tom*)

I noticed something disagreeable in here.

[*This, and the cold air blowing on their backs, is too much for Tom and Steve, who rise sheepishly and exit to the porch and out of sight. Helen looks after them and laughs.*

HELEN

I do declare it 's funny. I guess I 'm feelin' sort of flighty or I wouldn't act so silly. I ought to be ashamed, makin' 'em uncomfortable on purpose!

KATE

I guess they deserve to be more uncomfortable than anything we say could make them.

HELEN

We 'd better hurry; we 've got lots to do.

KATE

I left that other new dress of mine on a chair in your room; you 'd better try it on.

HELEN

I wouldn't dare to wear it! It 's cut so young!

KATE

You can't go to New York in that old thing! After this, I 'm going to see that you have everything I have, and I 'm going to have all I can get.

HELEN

We 'll have to be awful careful! I don't know as a thousand will be enough!

KATE

Your going makes all the difference. I am not afraid any more.

HELEN

Why should we be?

KATE

I 'll be making plenty of money long before we need it.

HELEN

I 'm as sure of it as I am of livin'!

KATE

Mother! Just think! We 're really going!

HELEN

I don't dare think. I just keep on doin' things!

KATE

Who 's afraid now?

HELEN

It don't seem real at all! I guess thinkin' about it so many years kinder makes it all seem like a story in a book — like it was about somebody else.

KATE

Well, it is n't.

HELEN

I know it, because every once in a while I get a kind of a sinking here. (*She puts her hand for a moment on her stomach*) Like a person does when they go down fast in an elevator!

KATE

You don't think I am going to fail?

HELEN

I know you 've got the talent; that 's all that matters. God gave it to you; He 'll help us.

KATE

And you 're not worrying about — about father?

HELEN

Why should I? He ain't worryin' much about me.

KATE

No, neither 's Tom Lane worrying! They don't know how!

HELEN

Some day, when I get settled down to think again, it 's goin' to hurt — your father's turnin' me out like he did, forgettin' in a minute all I 'd been to him for half a lifetime — but right now about all I 've got room for in my head is we 're goin'!

KATE

And you 're going to wear that new red dress!

HELEN

I don't know but I 'd about as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb! (*She takes a bulky roll of bills from her apron pocket*) Here, dear, the silver 's in a bag in the top tray of the trunk; here 's the rest of it.

KATE

Why should I take it?

HELEN

It 's your money. I 'm just going with you.

KATE

But ——

HELEN

That 's the way I want it!

KATE (*takes money*)

I don't see what difference it makes; what 's mine is yours.

HELEN

Two people so much alike as we are, just living together, can't help being happy.

[*She puts the cardboard box she has been holding on her arm on table and opens it. Kate looks up from packing the top tray of her trunk and sees her mother sorting over the contents of the box.*

KATE

What 's that?

HELEN

Just rubbish, things I 've had ever since I was a girl. I s'pose I 'd better burn it. (*She is looking through old letters, a few dance cards, a photograph or two*) Goodness! What truck folks keep! (*She comes across a faded old photograph and after glancing at it, stands looking at it intently*)

KATE

Let 's see what you 're looking at. (*She crosses and looks at the photograph at first with simple curiosity, then with amazed recognition*) Oh, mother! [*She laughs.*

HELEN (*indignant*)

I don't see anything to laugh at!

KATE

But to think of father — young!

HELEN

Well, he *was!*

KATE

Of course, he must have been! I should think he would have *hated* it!

HELEN

He was young as anybody once!

KATE (*looking at photo*)

He was about Tom's age, wasn't he?

HELEN

He was better lookin'.

KATE (*doubtfully*)

Do you think so?

HELEN

I know it! (*She puts the photograph aside*) I won't burn it! I ought to, but I won't!

[*She starts to sort over the other things.*

KATE

It 's no use! I can't think of him as young! Did he — (*She giggles*) — Did he used to make love to you?

HELEN

It might be a good thing if you minded your own business.

KATE

Wrote you love letters and everything?

HELEN

Of course he did!

KATE

I 'll bet they 're all there!

HELEN

He didn't write many.

KATE

I 'll bet he didn't.

HELEN

They 're here somewhere — ah!

[*As she finds a pitifully thin package bound up with a faded ribbon.*

KATE

Is that all?

HELEN (*defencelessly*)

He wasn't any much!

KATE (*puts out her hand*)

I want to read them!

HELEN (*draws away*)

Well, you can't! (*She opens one of the letters and looks at it*) "January tenth, nineteen hundred." That 's a long time ago!

KATE

You can't make me believe it 's a love letter!

HELEN

Well, it is! "My dear Helen!" (*She reads*) I can remember how happy I was the day I got this. Just as if it was yesterday! (*She reads*) "I got to New York all right, about six o'clock and went to the Bartholdi Hotel and got a room. It was most eight before I got through supper, so I went right to bed."

KATE

Go on!

HELEN

That's all; he didn't write long letters.

KATE

Let 's see how he ended it!

HELEN (*reads*)

"Yours truly, Stephen Hardy."

KATE (*laughs*)

He *would.*

HELEN

That was just before we was married! (*She opens another one*) Oh, yes! (*As she looks at it*) This

was the year you was born — I was waitin' for you, an' he went to New York to raise the first mortgage we ever had on the farm.

KATE

Regular pleasure trip for *him!*

HELEN (*looking at letter*)

It 's funny, my forgettin' so much! I *was* happy sometimes! Look where I cried right on that letter! (*She points to stain on the old paper*) "My dear Wife." (*She reads*) "I don't like it here, and I wish I was back with you!" (*She sighs*) "The food here don't agree with me, and eating costs so much you 've either got to starve, or eat and suffer! I 've been thinking about you a lot, and about the hard time that 's coming to you——You 're a brave girl and a good wife — I know you 're going to be a good mother! — if the calf won't eat, you 'll have to give him a little warm milk morning and night. Remember you 've got to take good care of yourself until the baby comes. The rubbage from the garden will do for the pigs 'til I get home. Your loving husband — Steve!"

[*She sits in the chair and for a moment hides her face in her hands.*

KATE

Don't, mother!

[*She puts her hand tenderly on Helen's shoulders.*

HELEN

If he wanted me, I 'd stay, just so long as he 'd let you go!

KATE

He didn't want you, and he wouldn't let me go, not if he could help it!

HELEN

I wonder, while God was doin' it, he didn't fix it so 's we 'd be always young!

KATE

Maybe because he meant for us to take all the happiness we could while we could get it, and if we let it slip away from us, nobody but ourselves would be to blame.

HELEN

Maybe — that 's why I don't know as I deserve another chance.

[*Tom Lane looks slyly in at the window. Kate sees him out of the corner of her eye and stoops close to her mother's ear and speaks low.*

KATE

They 're looking at us through the window!

[*Helen straightens up with dignity and puts the letters back into the box and crosses and drops the box into the top tray of the trunk; then, her head thrown proudly back, she exits to the hall, followed by Kate. Tom looks in window again and speaks over his shoulder.*

TOM

They 're goin'! (*He and Steve pass the window and enter*) I couldn't hear what they was sayin'!

STEVE

'T was none of your business.

TOM

I wouldn't listen! Anyhow, they talked awful low.

[*Steve crosses to the kitchen clock and after looking at it earnestly, he takes it down from the shelf and shakes it.*

STEVE

Seems later than 't is! I 'm goin' to get supper.

[*He crosses to cupboard.*

TOM

I suppose you 've got to get used to doin' it.

STEVE

Any fool can do it! (*He looks over the shelves of the cupboard*) There 's plenty here, wasteful plenty!

TOM

Whatter you goin' to get?

STEVE

W-w-e-l-l? (*He takes down a package of prepared buckwheat flour*) I don't know but what I 'll make a flapjack.

TOM (*doubtfully*)

If I was you I 'd boil an egg!

STEVE (*reading directions*)

Simple enough! Anybody can make a flapjack.

[*He gets frying pan and puts it on the stove.*

TOM

I guess so, I never tried.

STEVE

There 's directions. (*He reads what is on package*) I see! (*He pours some flour directly into the frying pan*) I 'll make plenty and you can stay an' eat.

[*He draws a dipper of water and pours it into the flour in the pan and stirs it with a spoon. Tom looks at the resulting mess doubtfully.*

TOM

No! No! I guess I 'll eat at home!

STEVE (*angrily*)

What 's the matter with it?

TOM

I don't know. (*He bends over it curiously*) It looks indecent.

STEVE

It 'll be all right!

TOM

I was n't hungry even *before* I looked at that! (*He crosses toward door*) I 'll see if they 've started workin' on the road.

STEVE

I 'll be out after a while.

TOM

Not if you eat them flapjacks!

[*He exits. Steve bends anxiously over his cooking as Kate enters with some clothes on her arm and stops in surprise.*

KATE

Father!

STEVE

Well!

[*Kate crosses over and looks into the frying pan.*

KATE (*in horror*)

What 's that?

STEVE

A flapjack. It ain't quite boiled.

KATE

If you eat anything like that while we 're away, mother will have to hurry right home and nurse you!

STEVE

If she goes she can't come back; I told her that.

KATE

But you didn't really mean it?

STEVE

Yes — she knows I meant it, and she 'll go for good; she was always proud! I got some pride myself and I ain't likely to forget what she said — about bein' unhappy here always. I ain't likely to forget.

KATE

She 'd have been happy if you 'd been a little kinder to her. If you 'd showed her a little plainer that you loved her.

STEVE

It was her business to know it.

KATE

I don't see how she could.

STEVE

A man can't be talkin' about love all the time! It 's just like religion — every day ain't Sunday! (*He looks at the mess in the frying pan desperately*) How long has this damned thing to boil!

KATE

Father! Ha! ha! ha! I never saw anything so funny in all my life! Ha! ha! ha!

[*She runs out, laughing wildly. Steve considers his mess gravely then picks up the package and adds more flour, finally emptying the whole package into it. As he bends over the stove, Helen enters. She has on a smart dark red dress and has arranged her hair to give a new look almost of girlishness. She sees him at the stove and crosses firmly and pushes him away and looks at the mess.*

STEVE (*defensively*)

It would have been all right in another minute.

HELEN

I fed the pigs *once* to-day!

STEVE

I was going to eat it.

HELEN

Go away! (*She picks up the frying pan and throws the contents in a garbage pail*) I 'll fix you something!

STEVE (*stiffly*)

I won't trouble you.

HELEN

Some eggs; that 's quick. (*She starts to prepare some scrambled eggs. He looks at her furiously*) What is it? What are you lookin' at me for?

STEVE

You look — different — sort of!

HELEN

Oh, this dress; it 's Kate's. She made me put it on.

STEVE

It 's — sort of — er — red!

HELEN

Yes. I think it 's nice.

STEVE

I don't know as I like it so well as the red one you had.

HELEN

I haven't had a red one for twenty years.

STEVE

That 's the one I meant.

[*He crosses and sits at table.*

HELEN (*at Steve*)

You 'll die if you was to try to look after yourself! I guess you can get a girl to come in for about seven dollars a week.

STEVE (*in horror*)

Seven dollars a week!

HELEN

About.

[*She cuts him some bread.*

STEVE

A man would have a right to divorce a woman that 's actin' like you 're doin'!

HELEN

Then you could *marry* a girl and save money! That Mrs. Lamont will be around for her eggs. I put 'em in this basket. (*She shows basket on table*) Eighty-five cents is a fair price. (*She crosses and puts food on his table*) There! Eat!

STEVE (*looks up at her*)

Was it twenty years since you had that red dress?

HELEN

I made it before we was married. How 'd you come to remember it?

STEVE

I don't know — seems like you 'd always had it.

HELEN

Before it wore out that 's how it seemed to me.

STEVE

Somehow I sort of see you in it — I mean when you ain't really around — and I 'm sort of seein' you, in my mind like. You were a good-lookin' girl, a mighty good-lookin' girl. (*He looks up at her; she is quite softened*) You ain't changed much. (*She half turns away, confused by his compliment*) I mean you ain't changed so much as I thought you had!

HELEN (*angrily*)

Eat your supper!

STEVE

Yes. (*He draws his place to him and starts to butter his bread*) It 's past my time; I hate my vittals late! Twenty years — I remember the first time ever I saw that red dress.

HELEN

Huh!

STEVE

You was in the kitchen at your house, an' I came to take yer to a dance down to the Port.

HELEN

It was New Year's night. It had been snowin', and it was so lovely in the moonlight. You pulled me all the way on your sled, down to the Port! (*She drops into the chair opposite him, and bends eagerly across the table*) It was a big party, the only big one I ever went to, before or since. It was the first time I 'd ever waltzed, I mean before folks, with a *man*. I remember how it scared me, it seemed so bold!

STEVE

There 's dances now that 's worse than waltzing! You 'll see 'em in New York.

HELEN

My goodness! (*She rises hastily*) I almost forgot New York.

STEVE (*slowly*)

Helen! I want you not to go!

HELEN

Talkin' about — about that old red dress of mine has made us sort of sentimental. I guess you don't mean that, Steve!

STEVE

I do. You didn't act right, Helen, but I 'll try and forget it.

HELEN

And you 'll let Kate take the money and go, like I always planned she should!

STEVE

She 'll be all right here.

HELEN

She 's going, Steve! That 's settled! As for me, it 's for you to say.

STEVE (*angrily*)

I say she ain't goin'!

HELEN (*coldly*)

Yes, she is, and so am I. You 'd better eat your supper.

STEVE

I won't! (*He pushes his chair away and rises angrily*) I can't! To hell with it!

[*He exits to the outside, slamming the door. Helen looks after him for a moment tearfully; then her pride asserts itself and she crosses grimly to the trunk. Taking her box of treasured letters and photographs, she goes to the stove, and lifting up one of the lids she dumps the whole mass into the fire. Then, thinking of his photograph, she crosses and gets it from the table and returns firmly and throws it into the flames, and crosses out to hall. Ben Glenny comes to outside door and knocks. There is no answer and he knocks again. Kate enters from hall and crosses to trunk with a bunch of keys in her hand. She hears the knock.*

KATE

Come in! (*The door opens and Ben enters*) Oh! It 's you, Mr. Glenny!

[*She puts things in trunk and clears away the dishes on the table, putting the bread away and throwing the egg out.*

BEN

I was lookin' for Tom Lane.

KATE (*coldly*)

He doesn't live here!

BEN

He 's here a lot, and I 've got to find him.

KATE

He 's probably at his garage.

BEN

No, he ain't. (*Kate crosses to the easel and takes her painting and puts it on table. Ben sees it*) What 's that?

KATE

My painting.

BEN (*looks at it*)

It 's nice.

KATE

Thank you.

BEN

It 's as good as some photographs.

[*Kate starts to cover the painting with stout paper.*

KATE

You flatter me. I am going to take this to New York with me. Mother and I are going in about half an hour.

BEN

What are you going to take it to New York for?

KATE

To sell it! (*He grins*) Don't you believe I can?

BEN

Yes, I do! Ain't they the darndest fools! (*He crosses to door*) If Tom comes, tell him I 've got to see him.

[*He exits to outdoors. Kate, who is covering her painting with paper, stops and looks about for something to fasten it with. She crosses to hall door, and raising her voice, calls to her mother.*

KATE

Mother! Mother! Where 's some string?

HELEN (*upstairs*)

Up here!

KATE

I 'm coming!

She runs out. Steve wanders in from outdoors and stops in front of the clock and scowls at it, then crosses to the cupboard and butters the end of the half loaf of bread, and cuts a slice. And he is about to bite into it, there is a knock on the door. He pauses, with his mouth open, and looks angrily toward door as the knock is repeated. He puts his bread down with a patient sigh and crosses and opens door. Dana and Dora Lamont are discovered, as they stand in the doorway.

DORA

We want to speak to Mrs. Hardy. I am Mrs. Lamont.

STEVE

She left the eggs, they 're in this basket. (*He crosses and gets basket from table*) She said you 'd be over for 'em in the mornin'; it will be ninety cents.

DORA

Ninety? Why I have only been paying your wife eighty-five!

STEVE

Eggs is up.

DORA

Give him ninety cents, please, Dana.

[*She takes the basket from Steve as Dana hunts in his pocket, then draws out a roll of bills.*

DANA

I 've nothing less than a dollar. (*He holds out a dollar bill*) You can collect next time or you may owe me ten cents.

STEVE (*takes the dollar*)

Looks like it would be fairer if I was to owe you ten cents.

DORA

No. (*She hunts in her bag and finds the change*) Give him back the dollar; here is the right change.

STEVE

Just as you say. (*He returns the dollar to Dana and takes the change; counting it carefully, he drops it in his pocket*) My wife 's upstairs if you want to see her, but she an' my daughter are going to New York in just a few minutes.

DORA

They wanted Mr. Lamont to look at a painting.

STEVE

Oh? (*He turns to Dana*) You 're an artist?

DANA

Yes.

STEVE

I 'm glad you 're here. I got a reason for wantin'

you to look at Kate's picture! I guess this is it. (*He crosses to table and removes the wrapping-paper and turns the picture over*) Yes — there it is.

DANA

Yes.

[*He crosses and stands looking down at the painting.*

DORA (*with him*)

The mother is *so* ambitious for her, Dana. I want you to like it, if you can!

[*There is a pause, during which Dana looks at the painting. Kate enters behind them, unnoticed, and stands in the door, looking on anxiously.*

STEVE

Well?

DANA (*gravely, to Steve*)

You said you had a reason for wanting me to see this. What was your reason?

STEVE

I guess no man knows less about art, and such as that, than me; but it happens to be a bit of land around here she painted, and I know land.

DANA

Your opinion should be of as much value, then, as my own — what do you think of this yourself?

STEVE (*slowly*)

Somehow, it seems to me it don't look like it ought — not just like — I don't know — it 's Tom Lane's twenty acres all right — but it don't look just like it was alive, somehow, does it?

DANA (*gravely*)

No.

STEVE

It 's grass, but it ain't growing grass; there 's the spring wheat, but you can't somehow think of its ever ripening — like wheat does.

DANA

No.

STEVE

Do you mean she can't paint?

DANA

I am afraid ——

[*Kate gives a moan of anguish, and Dora turns and sees her.*

DORA (*sharply*)

Dana!

[*The two men look around, and see her; there is a pause. Kate comes forward, trembling, looking from one to another. They all are distressed and uneasy.*

STEVE

I — I was speakin' to this gentleman here about your picture. He was sayin' it was pretty good, real good he seemed to think it was, for — for a girl that hadn't had much teachin' — I — I got to see if my stock 's all fixed for the night. (*He crosses toward door*) He liked that picture real well; he 'll tell you so himself, if you ask him.

[*He exits. Kate comes slowly down and looks at her painting.*

DORA

My husband will tell you how very nice ——

KATE

Please! (*She puts out her hand sharply, and Dora stops. Kate bends over picture*) It doesn't look — alive — he said — that's grass, but it doesn't

seem to grow! I wonder! — (*She looks at Dana*) Was he right? I want to know the truth. Can't I paint?

DANA

That might mean so many things.

KATE

No, there 's only one thing it can mean! Have I a talent, a real talent, like my mother 's always told me?

DANA

I am sorry, I am afraid you haven't.

KATE

If I worked hard — and I would — if I had good teachers, couldn't they teach me to be an artist?

DANA

That is something that can't be taught; one *is* or is n't.

KATE

And I 'm — I 'm — not?

DANA

I see nothing here but the conventional schoolgirl water color. Your color and drawing you could improve, but there is nothing here to justify the effort.

KATE

No talent? Nothing?

DANA

I am sorry!

KATE

You have been honest — you are a man who knows.

DANA

It hasn't been an easy thing to say.

KATE

I — I don't just seem to know what to do.

DORA

My poor child!

[*She comes forward with ready sympathy.*

KATE

No! (*She draws away*) I had to *know!* You see, it means so much to us, to mother and me, we 've planned so long! I ——

[*She breaks down and turns and almost runs outdoors.*

DORA (*to Dana*)

You brute! You could have lied to her.

DANA

About anything else.

DORA

There 're other things in the world besides your paints and brushes!

DANA

For girls like her. I 'll take the eggs. (*He takes the basket*) Poor kid!

DORA

You are absolutely heartless!

DANA

New York is full of them, breaking their hearts, — painters, musicians, writers, men and women who want to create something and who can't. Wanting to do it doesn't help much; even trying doesn't — when it is n't there! We 'll get the butter in the morning.

[*They exit together to the outside. In a moment Steve, Tom and Ben Glenny pass the window and enter through the same door.*

BEN

I know it 's hard, Tom, an' it 's a thing I ain't even got used to really relish doin', but it 's part of my job!

STEVE

Seems like they might have given the boy a chance.

BEN

Eight hundred dollars is a lot of money!

TOM

I can't pay it, not now; mebby I could if they 'd give me time.

BEN

The writ of attachment don't say nothin' about givin' any time! I 'll have to ask you fer the keys to your garage, Tom. I take formal possession accordin' to the law. Here 's ther writ.

[*He shows paper.*

TOM

It' s the damned detour that done it! If they hadn't known about that, they 'd have waited till cash was comin' in!

BEN

An' the aggravatin' part of it is they ain't goin' to be no detour!

TOM

What?

BEN

I just got word the road's open again; they decided not to fix it till next fall. Seems the summer folks have been objectin'!

TOM

The road 's open!

BEN

Yes.

TOM

And you 're attachin' my garage!

BEN

Less you can pay me eight hundred dollars.

TOM

Damned if I ain't disgusted! Talk about luck! Lost my garage! Lost everything! Just by a day!

[*Helen enters with her hat on and a small old-fashioned traveling bag in her hand.*

HELEN

Where is Kate! It 's time we started!

STEVE

I ain't seen her!

HELEN

Somebody 's got to get that trunk to the station. Is your car here, Mr. Glenny?

BEN

Sure, I 'll fetch it down.

STEVE (*coldly to Helen*)

So you 're goin'?

HELEN

Yes — you an' Tom carry the trunk out, an' put it in Mr. Glenny's car. Hurry up.

STEVE

I don't know as——

HELEN (*locks trunk*)

Well, I do! It 's the last favor I 'm ever goin' to ask of either one of you, an' I guess it won't hurt you none!

STEVE

No, I don't know as it would hurt us none. Come on, Tom!

[*Steve and Tom pick up trunk.*

HELEN

Put it right in the car. I 'll get a check for it at the station. (*Kate enters from outside*) Oh! There you are, Kate, Mr. Glenny 's goin' to take us down. Hurry and get your hat.

BEN

Wait a minute, Tom. I got to ask you for them keys.

TOM

Oh, yes.

[*He and Steve set the trunk down and Tom takes out a bunch of keys and starts to take one key off.*

STEVE

It 's pretty hard on Tom!

HELEN

What is?

STEVE

Ben Glenny 's got an attachment on his place; he 's takin' possession.

HELEN

Oh, I 'm sorry!

TOM

An' ther road 's open! I 'd 'a' made big money; now I 'm done for?

HELEN

Can't somethin' be done about it?

BEN

Not without I 'm paid eight hundred dollars.

KATE

I 'll pay it.

HELEN

What are you talkin' about?

KATE

You said it was my money! (*She shows the roll of bills*) I 'm going to pay it.

HELEN

You can't!

KATE

I 'm going to! That 's all!

[*She starts to count money.*

HELEN

But that only leaves us two hundred dollars!

KATE

You can have that! I don't want it! Here 's the eight hundred, Mr. Glenny!

[*Ben takes the money and starts to count it.*

HELEN

But how can we live till you get so 's you can sell your paintings!

KATE

Sell my paintings! Ha! ha! ha! Sell my grass that doesn't grow, and my wheat that will never ripen! Mr. Glenny here said they were all fools in New York. They 'd have to be to buy any picture I ever painted!

HELEN

Do you know what you 're sayin'?

KATE

Mr. Lamont was here! Father made him look at that! (*She points to the painting on table*) At that awful, awful thing!

HELEN

He saw it?

KATE

And he said it was *bad!* He said it was hopeless. No talent! Nothing! Never — never in all my life will I paint again! Never! Never!

TOM (*sincerely touched*)

He told you that! The damned brute! He hurt you like that! Oh, my poor little girl — I 'm sorry! [*He holds out his arms to her, and she runs into them, clinging to him.*

KATE

Be good to me, Tom! Comfort me! Help me!

TOM (*pets her*)

There — there — don't you cry!

HELEN

Said you couldn't paint! It ain't so! It ain't! It can't be! We won't give up!

STEVE (*turns on her sternly*)

Hush! Can't you see she 's feelin' bad!

TOM (*arms about Kate*)

You 'd ought to be ashamed! Makin' more trouble at a time like this?

KATE

You mustn't speak like that, Tom. (*She turns severely to Helen*) But he 's right, mother! It 's all your fault! I never would have thought of painting if it hadn't been for you!

TOM

I guess the less we say about it the better, so long as it turned out all right.

STEVE

That 's what I say! Let bygones be bygones!

HELEN

I won't believe it! I can't. You ain't going to give that money to Tom Lane; the money I 've slaved for all these years! I won't let you do it! We won't give up, we 'll keep on tryin'!

KATE

I won't. I couldn't.

HELEN

I say he can't have it.

TOM

All right. I won't be under any favors to yer, if you feel that way about it! Give her back the money, Ben!

BEN

Just as you say. (*He hands the money to Kate*) Settle it among yerselves.

TOM

Now she 's got it, an' I tell yer somethin' yer can't stop, Mrs. Hardy? Supposin' she was to give all that money to her own father, an' supposin' he was to give it to me as a payment on my twenty acres!

STEVE

Now you 're talkin'!

KATE (*giving him money*)

That 's just what I 'll do.

HELEN

And he 'll have more land to pay taxes and interest on all our lives, and you 'll have your garage — and you 'll have *her*, my daughter!

TOM

Everybody will have what they 've allers wanted; no-

body will lose nothin' at all, unless maybe it 's *you*, and all you 'll lose is just a dream.

HELEN

That 's all.

[*She sits heavily by table.*

STEVE (*to Ben*)

Here 's yer eight hundred. You can fix that bill of sale the first thing in the mornin'.

BEN (*writes receipt*)

Just so long as everybody 's satisfied. Here!

[*He hands receipt to Tom.*

TOM

All right. Have them papers ready early.

[*He and Kate walk to door with Ben.*

BEN

About ten.

TOM

Kate an' her father 'll bring 'em down, I figgur on bein' busy with my garage.

[*Kate, Tom and Ben exit.*

STEVE

I hope this 'll be a warnin' to yer, Helen. You might have made a lot of trouble, if it hadn't been for me and Tom!

[*Ben comes to door, in his hand the board on which is painted Detour.*

BEN (*holds up board*)

Here 's the end of this. I pulled it down.

HELEN

And everything is just the same as it was before?

BEN

That 's right.

HELEN

Just the same as it always will be!

BEN

You bet; good evenin'.

[*He exits.*

HELEN (*very low*)

God — help — me!

STEVE (*looks at clock*)

I bet that clock 's slow!

HELEN

Slow? (*She looks up at the clock*) I guess not; mebby you 're hungry.

STEVE

It 's later 'n I like waiting.

HELEN (*rises*)

I 'll fix you a good hot supper.

[*As she crosses, he steps in front of her, holding out the ninety cents he takes from his pocket.*

STEVE

Here.

HELEN

What?

STEVE

That Mrs. Lamont left it; it 's your egg money.

HELEN

I thought the hens was yours.

STEVE

After this, I want you should have ther egg money for yourself.

HELEN

The trouble is that after this I won't have no use for money, Steve.

STEVE

I 'll put it here. (*He puts it on table*) I 'd feel better if you took it; it 's only ninety cents!

HELEN

Ninety cents for a dozen eggs! I told you to say eighty-five!

STEVE

I know, an' I tried to say it, only somehow it came out ninety.

HELEN

Mebby *you* was the one that should have gone to New York. (*She crosses to Steve and starts to work*) Ham and eggs is best, I guess. I suppose she 'll want Tom to stay.

STEVE

That looks like it, don't it? (*He points out window to where Tom and Kate stand in the glow of the summer sunset. Tom's arm is about Kate, her head is on his shoulders*) See how happy they are!

HELEN

Yes — I know — right now.

STEVE

They look nice, don't they? And in a year or so maybe there 'll be a baby. (*She turns at this, startled*) Yes — of course there 'll be a baby, — a girl, I hope; girls are easier managed. Yes, I hope it 's a girl; girls stay at home.

HELEN

Yes, girls stay at home!

STEVE

I sort to like to think about it, don't you?

[*He drops into chair.*

HELEN (*thoughtfully*)
A girl!

STEVE
You 're a good woman, Helen. I sort of hope she favors you.

HELEN
Another girl! Life sort of keeps goin' on forever, don't it? (*She crosses to table*) Steve?

STEVE
Yes?

HELEN
I guess I might as well keep the egg money.
[*She draws the empty jug in which she had so long kept her treasure to her and slowly picks up the coins.*

STEVE (*amused*)
Goin' to start savin' up again?

HELEN
I might.
[*She drops the first coin into the empty jug. It falls with a clatter against the china bottom.*

STEVE
What for?

HELEN
Oh — it might come in handy — some day.
[*She drops the others.*

STEVE
What for?

HELEN
Oh — I don't know.

STEVE
I do! (*He looks at her with a broad grin*) I bet

I do! For her! For the baby that ain't even born yet. Ha! Ha, ha, ha, ah ha!

[*But his loud, coarse laughter does not hurt her. She is standing, her face glorified, looking out into the future, her heart swelling with eternal hope.*

THE END